BING

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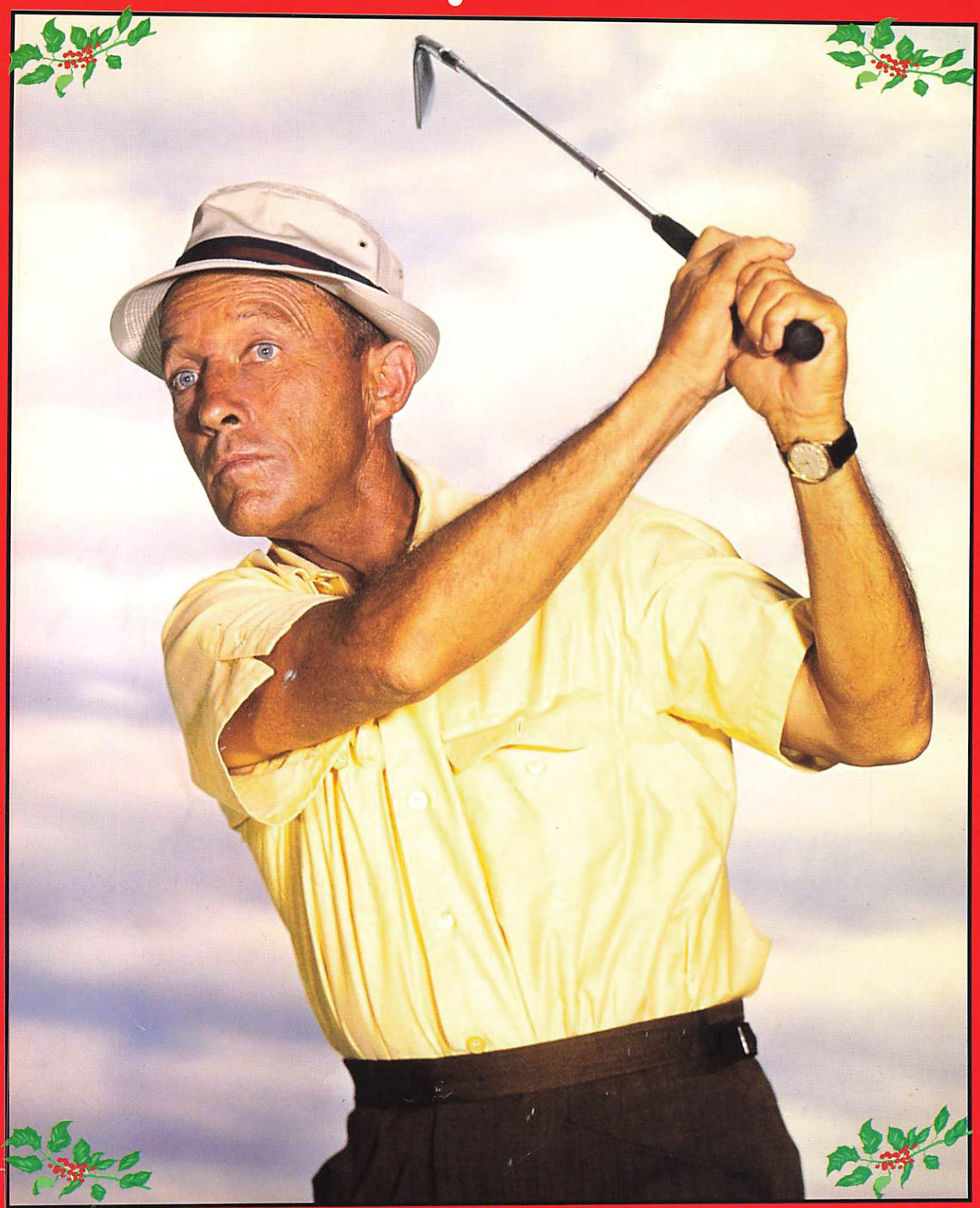

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

BING MAGAZINE (INCORPORATING BINGANG)

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

Founded in 1936, the world's longest-running fan club - as recognised by the Guinness Book of World Records

Web sites:

Club:	www.club-crosby.org
BING magazine:	http.//members.aol.com/macwilmslo/BING_magazine.html
Bing Crosby Internet Museum:	www.kcmetro.edu/~crosby/

Honorary President: KATHRYN CROSBY

Honorary Members: Harry Crosby - Mary Crosby Brodka - Nathaniel Crosby - Ken Barnes - Pat Boone - Rory Burke - Michael Feinstein - Rich Little - Gia Maione Prima

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Magazine Editor
MALCOLM MACFARLANE
3 Osborne Close
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 2EE, UK
Tel: 01625 528942
e-mail: Macwilmslo@aol.com

Secretary and Treasurer
MICHAEL CRAMPTON
19 Carrholm Crescent
Chapel Allerton
Leeds LS7 2NL, UK
Tel/Fax: 0113 2689556
e-mail: michael@club-crosby.org

American Co-Editor
GREG VAN BEEK
3006 Emerald Street,
West Bend
Wisconsin 53095, USA
Tel: (262) 338-8986
e-mail: tvanbeek@execpc.com

American / Canadian Representative
F.B. (Wig) WIGGINS
5608 North 34th Street
Arlington
Virginia 22207, USA
Tel/Fax: (703) 241-5608
e-mail: wigbing@hotmail.com

Australian / New Zealand Representative
DAVID CURRINGTON
34A Geoffrey Street,
Turramurra, New South Wales
Australia 2074
Tel: (02) 9440 2434
e-mail: david.currington@ato.gov.au

CONTRIBUTORS

American Contributors: Peter Cakanic / Wayne Martin / Martin McQuade / Judy Schmid

British Contributors: Bert Bishop / Ron Bosley / Ken Crossland / Keith Parkinson

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(a) American and Canadian members who should send their remittances in U.S. dollars to F. B. Wiggins
(b) Australian and New Zealand members who should pay David Currington in Australian dollars

Articles for inclusion in the magazine should be sent to the Magazine Editor or the American Co-Editor.

Other Correspondence concerning membership, non-arrival of the magazine or other aspects of the club's affairs should either be sent to the Secretary/Treasurer or to your local representative please.

BING is the official journal of *The International Club Crosby* and is published in the Spring, Summer and Winter of each year. Opinions expressed in articles are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the ICC.

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EDITORIAL

When Wayne Martin offered me the position of being your new American Co-Editor, I gratefully accepted the honor of being able to give back to an organization that has given me so much over the years. I also recognized that I would have some very big shoes to fill.

I wouldn't want to be thought of as Wayne's replacement, however. I wouldn't dream of it. No one can replace the irreplaceable. And Wayne Martin, much like Bing Crosby, is someone to which there is no equal. I'm simply going to do my best to carry on the work he has done to make the merger of the two Clubs so successful. I've known Wayne since I first joined Club Crosby back in 1987. I was all of 15 at the time, and had been discovering the magic of Bing for a full 5 years by then. Wayne and I hit it off immediately. I learned a great deal from him, and he always gave my work a lot of class. He has been my mentor and more importantly, a dear friend. I'm sure you all join with me in wishing Wayne a very happy retirement. I look forward to working more with Malcolm, Wig and the rest of the ICC management team.

So now, let me roll up my sleeves and get down to work for you! This is your Club, so if there's anything you'd like to see in the magazine, or any comments or suggestions you'd like to make, don't hesitate to contact one of us. If you find mention of Bing in a new publication, or on radio or television, let us know so that we can share it with the other members. It's important to acknowledge those who take the time to acknowledge or salute Bing.

Finally, if there are any members who have an idea for an article, again, please let us know. And if you would like to write an article yourself, please do. Don't be shy; if I can be labeled a "writer", believe me, ANYONE can!!

As I write this in October, I'm involved with two very exciting television projects for this Christmas season that I'm certain will generate much renewed interest in Bing. More details on a subsequent page.

If this reaches you in time, let me recommend a wonderful Christmas present for anyone you'd like to introduce Bing's radio work to; Shout Factory's 3-CD box set "Swingin' With Bing". This was produced and compiled by fellow ICC member Ken Barnes, with our Honorary President Kathryn Crosby serving as Executive Producer. It's by far the most important Crosby CD release in years and will not disappoint!

In closing, let me take this opportunity to extend my best wishes to all fellow ICC members for a very Merry Christmas, and a New Year filled with good health and much happiness.

Greg Van Beek

Thanks Greg, and it's good to have you on board. Greg has an article about Bing's Christmas cards later on in this issue and the images Greg provided were so attractive that it would have been a shame to only reproduce them in black and white. So we asked Jon Oye to put together a montage of some of them for our back cover and this he has done to magnificent effect. Jon has also kindly provided our front cover too. When we first started producing coloured covers, we were concerned that we should run out of them. Fortunately coloured pictures of Bing keep turning up and long may this continue.

In our last issue we gave details of our meeting in Dublin, Ireland when George O'Reilly did so much to make it a success. George has generously released one of the hundreds of letters he received from Bing to us for display on our inside back cover. The letter was written just after Bing had made his first ever visit to Ireland in 1961.

The UK arm of the ICC held its 39th annual meeting at Leeds in October and our star guest was Ken Barnes. We have a full report on a subsequent page. Ken has done so much for the Crosby cause over the years and he has recently kindly accepted our invitation to become an honorary member of the ICC.

Meanwhile, possibly even as you are reading this, a substantial Bing event is taking place in New York. Full details follow in the next few pages.

Seasons greetings to you all!

Malcolm Macfarlane

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SECRETARY / TREASURER'S REPORT

Warmest greetings to members as we move into our second year as the International Club Crosby. The combining of two clubs into one has been almost seamless and we are now enjoying the fruits of a combined team.

The centenary events, which spilled over into 2004, raised Bing's profile and it will be difficult for this level of interest to be sustained in the years ahead. However, ICC members are resourceful and I am confident that they will remind the media at every opportunity of Bing's rightful place in the history of popular music.

As Greg Van Beek has already mentioned, Ken Barnes has produced an exceptional 3-CD set, 'Swinging with Bing' and the response from radio/media people has been laudatory as you will read later on in this issue. Thanks to Ken for an exceptional package with beautiful art work and superb sound.

NEW MEMBERS

It's a great pleasure to welcome the following to membership of the International Club Crosby. Many inform us that they are lifelong Bing Crosby admirers and they look forward eagerly to increasing their knowledge of Bing's life and times.

We are pleased to include the first forty members of CLUB CROSBY who were also members of the International Crosby Circle. The remaining members will be featured in the spring 2005 edition of the magazine. To all, may you be enriched by your involvement with the club.

Brazil
Joao Daudt d' Oliveira Neto (Rio de Janeiro)
England
Mrs. Pat Barrs (Over Whitacre, Nr. Coleshill), Mr A Bolland (Runcorn, Cheshire), Gary Paylor (Whitby, North Yorkshire), Mrs. J. Tanner (Billingham, Co. Durham), Mrs Doreen Whitehouse (Worsbrough Dale, South Yorkshire), Stan Wootton (Glen Parva, Leicester).
Republic of Ireland
Hugh J Quinn (Dublin)
Canada
Jean-Guy Levasseur (Quebec),
(PLUS former ICC members who were also members of CLUB CROSBY)
Peter Gray (Ontario), Lorne Harasen (Saskatchewan)
United States of America
John Yancy, North Eastern Nevada Museum (Elko, Nevada), Alison Stevenson (Camarillo, California), James Clifford (Horwell, New York), Patricia Kenny (New York, New York), Ralph Bannigan (Kansas City, Missouri), B D Linblad (Beesley's Point, New Jersey), Sharon Briscoe (Port Arthur, Texas), Finn Tellefsen (West Palm Beach, Florida), Stephen Koumos (Malverne, New York), Jay Lineberry (Greensboro, North Carolina), Lawrence Zwisohn (Los Angeles, California), Robert Gardner (Bothwell, Washington), Carolyn Schneider (Les Vegas, Nevada)
(PLUS former ICC members who were also members of CLUB CROSBY)
Nathaniel Allyn (Palo Alto, California), Steve Ames (Springfield, New Jersey), Maria Babcock (Yakima, Washington), Irving Bauman (Sea Girt, New Jersey), James Bauman (Canton, Ohio), George Bentley (North Little Rock, Arkansas), Casper Blaumer (Portland, Oregon), Norman Bodarky (Lake Worth, Florida), Anthony Calonico (Deer Park, Illinois), Michael Cannon (Fort Lauderdale, Florida), Joe Cornet (Arcadia, California), Ronald Czarnik (St. Louis, Missouri), Caroline Dawson (West Somerville, Massachusetts), Jim Determan (Encinitas, California), Joseph Duncan (Muncie, Indiana), Robert Edelstein (Edgewater Park, New Jersey), Victor Ferguson (Jackson, New Hampshire), Chris Foran (Glendale, Wisconsin), Charles Ford (Venice, Florida), William Fowler (Louisville, Kentucky), Thomas Franz (Ashland, Kentucky), Jeffrey Freeman (San Diego, California), Carmelus Gallegos (Tacoma, Washington), Catherine Gatto (Adamstown, Pennsylvania), Vince Giordano (Brooklyn, New York), Stephen Greenfield (New York, New York), Dorothy Hanke (Milwaukee, Wisconsin), Leo Harris (Milwaukee, Wisconsin), Natalie Heines (Mission, Kansas), Herb Heki (Urbandale, Iowa), Patrick Helbling (South Beach, Oregon), R W Hendricks (Brick, New Jersey), Dick Hoffman

(Youngstown, New York), Scott Hughes (Paradise, California), Conrad Javier (Syracuse, New York), Conrad Cominski (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania), Mike Kaptanis (Yonkers, New York), Leonard Kay (East Stoudsburg, Pennsylvania), Thomas Kessel (Stamford, Connecticut), Albert Kenig (North Andover, Massachusetts).

DEATHS

We extend our sincere condolences to the family and friends of the following UK members who died recently.

Mrs Geraldine Deaver (Peterborough, Cambridgeshire), Mrs May Smith (Peebles, Scotland)

CALENDAR 2005

This is our 16th calendar and Ron Bosley has chosen some rare photographs to enhance this tasteful production. We urge members to buy at least one or two copies as the sale of the calendar helps to keep the ICC finances in good shape.

Copies may be obtained from myself, Wig Wiggins and in Australia from David Currington or Bob Neate.

LEEDS 2004

Our 39th meeting was a great success and we were delighted with our new hotel and facilities. Honours were shared between Ken Barnes and Malcolm Macfarlane for their quality presentations and we will return to Weetwood Hall for our 40th anniversary meeting next year. My gratitude is also extended to Arnold Pope who teased us once again with his musical quiz and as in previous years no one managed to score 10 out of 10. Malcolm has the full story.

TV BOOK

Copies of this beautifully illustrated 200pp book remain for sale from either your secretary or Wig Wiggins.

SUBSCRIPTION 2005

The annual fee remains at the 2004 rate and is now due. Members should send payment to their local representative as detailed on the inside cover of the journal.

MAY I APPEAL ONCE AGAIN FOR PROMPT PAYMENT.

Finally, as the festive season draws near, may I extend warm felicitations to all and long may your support for the ICC endure.

Michael Crampton

Bing - Back on TV

Greg Van Beek tells us more about the exciting new projects with which he is involved.

The first project is for ABC-tv, where Bing will be brought back from beyond for yet another new "virtual" duet in the tradition of the Clay Aiken / Little Drummer Boy project of last year. This time, Bing will be paired with husband and wife team Nick Lachey and Jessica Simpson, two of the hottest personalities in show business today. They will present the duet as part of "Nick & Jessica's Family Christmas", a new one hour special set to air on ABC-tv in the USA on December 1st.

Bing's performance of 'White Christmas' from the 1966 *Hollywood Palace* Christmas show (in color) was used to create this new duet at my suggestion. It was a lot easier to do than last year's project with Clay Aiken, due in large part to the fact that ABC-tv is one of the current owners of the *Hollywood Palace* series, and this new special is also an ABC production (even though it was taped at CBS Television City). There wasn't the problem of locating a master tape for the show, as the network knew exactly where to find it.

I'd been working with producer Paul Flattery since he first contacted me August 31, so from start to finish, the process only took a little over 5 weeks. Paul is sharing an office with the producer of last year's Clay Aiken duet, Gary Tellalian. It was Gary who suggested that Paul use Bing on his show, and that he contact me to help.

Like them or not, Jessica Simpson and her husband Nick Lachey are VERY popular right now. They're about as mainstream as two people can get. For Jessica to want to sing with Bing Crosby is a testament to Bing's undisputed place as the premiere Christmas song stylist of all time. Think of all of the other singers they could've used who are no longer with us. Names like Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Perry Como, even Elvis all come to mind. Not to mention the fact that it would've been much easier, and a lot less work if they had used a live singer who is associated with the music of

Christmas, like Andy Williams or Tony Bennett or Johnny Mathis. But no, they wanted Bing. And I for one think that's really great! It's going to do a lot for Bing's modern day image and, as did the Clay Aiken duet last year, will no doubt make a few more youngsters aware of who Bing is and what he represents.

The second, and most exciting project, will be a a new pledge drive special for PBS-tv which will be comprised solely of excerpts from the color *Hollywood Palace* Christmas Shows of 1965-1969. Bing hosted the shows from 1965-68, and Perry Como hosted in 1969. The Crosby family will be featured throughout the show via newly taped interview segments, as will the Producer and Music Director of the *Hollywood Palace* TV series.

This new show will be called *Christmas at the Hollywood Palace* and is being produced by my friend John Scheinfeld, who has done so many of the great PBS specials of the past like "Sinatra Classic Duets", "Vintage Sinatra", "Andy Williams: My Favorite Duets", "The Best of the Andy Williams Christmas Shows", "MWAH! The Best of The Dinah Shore Show" and many others. John videotaped interviews for the show during October with the Crosby family, *Hollywood Palace* producer Bill Harbach, and Palace music director Nick Perito.

This will be the first newly produced Bing Crosby Christmas compilation to air on television since 1979's "A Bing Crosby Christmas- Just Like The One's We Used To Know"! It is scheduled to start appearing on PBS-tv stations across the USA on November 29.

Further details can be seen at:
http://www.aptonline.org/catalog.nsf/vTitle/CHRISTMAS+AT+THE+HOLLYWOOD+PALACE

I will have a full report on the outcome of these projects in the Spring issue of BING.

Greg Van Beek

(Editor: Great news from Greg and we look forward to a full report in due course. Also Martin McQuade has arranged for Kathryn Crosby to appear on 'The Tony Danza Show' on Tuesday, December 7th. The show is recorded live in New York at 10 a.m. and broadcast nationally on ABC-TV. Mr. Danza is known to be a Sinatra aficionado, but is also quite a Bing fan. Kathryn will promote the PBS Special during the show. In addition, arrangements have been made by Martin for Kathryn and Bill Harbach to appear in studio that night at 10:30pm on Channel 13 in New York as the Hollywood Palace special is broadcast during pledge drive week. Mrs. Crosby will offer copies of "My Last Years With Bing" as incentives for new contributors to PBS.)

Bing retrospective in New York

Martin McQuade also gave us advance notice of another series of events, many of which will probably have taken place by the time you receive your magazine.

A retrospective entitled "Celebrating The Crosbys" devoted to Bing at the Donnell Media Center of the New York Public Library was anticipated to be held starting on November 20th with a performance by Mrs Crosby and continuing throughout December with ten afternoons of screenings. The Donnell Media Center is located at 20 West 53rd street in Manhattan. All events are in the Donnell auditorium, seating 250 Admission is free.

The full schedule (subject to change) is:

Saturday, November 20th at 2:30 p.m. "Kathryn Crosby Remembers Bing", accompanied by pianist Dave Gross. 60 minutes.

Tuesday, November 23rd, at 6:00 p.m. repeat performance by Mrs. Crosby.

Wednesday, December 1st, at 2:30 p.m. *Parkinson: Meet Bing Crosby*, 1975, 67 minutes; *The Bing Crosby Show*, Christmas Eve, 1962, with Mary Martin and Andre Previn, 60 minutes.

Thursday, December 2nd, at 2:30 p.m.. *East Side Of Heaven*, 1939, 83 minutes.

Wednesday, December 8th, at 2:30 p.m.. *If I Had My Way*, 1940, 82 minutes.

Thursday, December 9th at 2:30 p.m. Meet The Maker - Martin McQuade: Bing Crosby Television Clips Show, 120 minutes, followed by questions and answers.

Wednesday, December 15th at 2:30 p.m. Meet The Maker - Bob DeFlores: Film and Out-takes Clip Show. 120 minutes, followed by questions and answers.

Thursday, December 16th, at 2:30 p.m. *Please*, short, 20 minutes; *Here Is My Heart*, 1934, 77 Minutes. Repeat screening at 6:00 p.m. with special guest, Kitty Carlisle Hart.

Wednesday, December 22nd at 2:30 p.m.. *Out Of This World*, 1945, 96 minutes.

Thursday, December 23rd at 2:30 p.m. *Duffy's Tavern*, 1945, 97 minutes.

Wednesday, December 29th at 2:30 p.m.. *The Chrysler Theater: The House Next Door*, 1963-64, 55 minutes, with Bob Hope and Kathryn Crosby (world theatrical

premiere); 2 episodes of *The Bing Crosby Show* (sit-com): 1) "The Image", with Kathryn Crosby, 24 minutes; 2) "Moonlighting Becomes You", with Mel Torme, 24 minutes. The Director of *The Bing Crosby Show,* James Sheldon, will be a guest.
Thursday, December 30th at 2:30 p.m.. *A Connecticut Yankee In King Arthur's Court*, 1949, 107 minutes.

This celebration sprang from an idea Martin McQuade suggested to the head librarian at Donnell. He had taken Mrs. Crosby there in May and she gave her approval immediately. It is Martin's hope that this should serve to whet the appetite for the retrospectives planned in NY for the fall/winter of 2005 by both The Museum Of TV and Radio and the Lincoln Center Film Society.

Some of our local members were planning to attend on November 20 and also have a separate get-together. We shall have more about this exciting event in our next issue.

There'll be a White Christmas in San Francisco this year

San Francisco's Curran Theatre will be presenting a stage version of *White Christmas* from November 3 until December 26. The plan for the stage musical is to make it a holiday tradition in the vein of *A Christmas Carol.* The work will debut at the Curran Theatre in San Francisco - where such Broadway-bound stagings as *La Bohème* and *Wicked* have played in recent years. It's also the stage where *Dame Edna: Back With a Vengeance* plays prior to Broadway.

Tickets to *White Christmas* at the Curran, 445 Geary St. in San Francisco, CA, are available by calling (415) 512-7770. For more information, visit www.bestofbroadway-sf.com .

"Bing Crosby's Restaurant & Piano Bar" — in Walnut Creek, California.

News has been coming in of a new 300-seat restaurant in Walnut Creek, California called *Bing Crosby's Restaurant & Piano Bar.* Restaurateurs Jeff and Rick Dudum have formed a partnership with Kathryn Crosby and are hoping to grow this initial venture into a chain of restaurants, with Crosby memorabilia inside— hunting, golf & fishing themed areas, along with some of Bing's favorite dishes on the menu. The chef is former Lafayette Park Hotel chef Frank Palmer, who says that the restaurant will be casual during the day and a fine-dining destination at night, with live piano music. Hours will be 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 a.m. and the menu will be at the upper end for Walnut Creek, which is something of a restaurant mecca in the locality, at $10 – $15 lunch and $15 – $30 for dinner. Parking is unlimited. The restaurant will be at 1342 Broadway Plaza. In due course, there will be a "Bing's Bus" to and from the very large and high-end Rossmore Retirement Community every evening. Walnut Creek itself is in the Bay area and is east of Oakland. Newspaper comments included the following:

> With the largest population of residents 65 and older in the county, the city seems like the perfect place to open a restaurant honoring one of the nation's most famous stars of years past.
>
> If the reaction of some downtown strollers indicates anything, Crosby's star may not shine as brightly for a younger generation but still draws older folks. The restaurant idea perplexed 26-year-old Napa resident Betina Calcalderi. "I've never heard of that guy," she said. But Rossmoor resident Virginia McClimans said it sounded like a wonderful idea: "Everyone loves Bing Crosby."
>
> Many younger adults liked the idea of a new eatery with good food and a piano bar, even if they didn't know how Crosby for years thrilled millions. Others said it appealed because it reminded them of their grandparents' music. The restaurant's memorabilia - such as photos and jackets - will recall memories and spark curiosity for the old and young.

A replica of Bing's star from the Hollywood Walk of Fame has been installed at the entrance to the restaurant. We wish the venture every success. Wouldn't it be great to dine in such an establishment?

The Bing Crosby Show 1954-1956

As we know, Bing had a 15-minute radio show broadcast on Mondays to Fridays from November 1954 until December 1956. We have copies of all the shows until April 18, 1955 when the supply dries up and we have only intermittent details of the shows until August 1955. Then, nothing!

This gap in our information is surprising when we consider just how much we know about Bing's early radio shows. It occurs to us that there must be someone out there who has either got the missing shows or at least knows their contents. If so, your Editor would love to hear from you.

Meanwhile, here's the indefatigable Greg Van Beek again...

Regis Philbin Pays Tribute To Bing

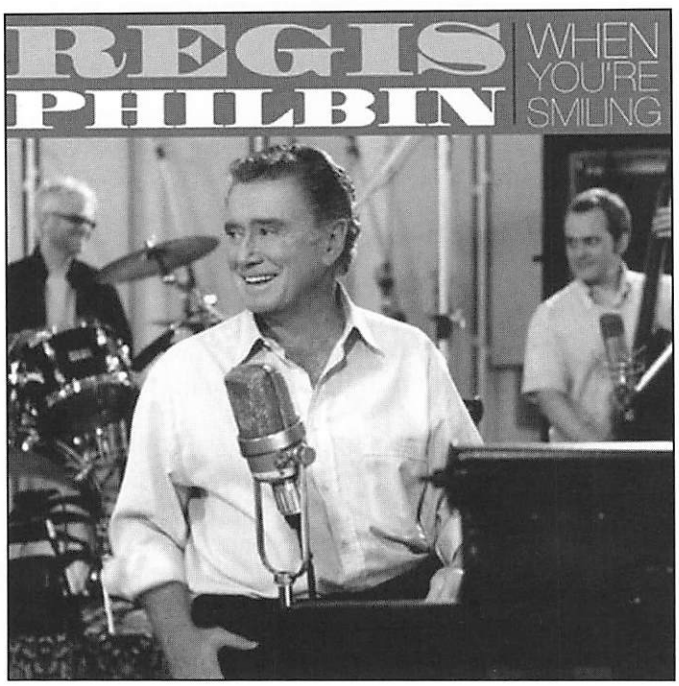
TV Talk Show / Game Show host Regis Philbin has recorded a new album, his first in 37 years. The album, titled "When You're Smiling", was released by Hollywood Records on September 28th. In the Summer issue of BING, I mentioned my phone conversation with Regis this past February. In the liner notes to his album, Regis shocked me by including the following:

> "In the spring of 2004, twenty-year old [sic] Greg Van Beek from West Bend, Wisconsin sent me a CD copy of the Bing Crosby appearance on the Joey

Bishop Show. I never thought I'd hear that again, but here it was. It brought back a lot of memories and I got a big kick out of it. A few weeks later, out of the blue, came a contract offer for me to do an album for Hollywood Records. I grabbed it and made this album. What the heck, every 37 years I get lucky I guess.

With Steve Tyrell as my producer and some great musicians from both coasts, we did some of the great classic songs which seem to be making a comeback these days. It was a real thrill for me. My wife Joy duetted with me on *They Can't Take That Away From Me*, Ronan Tynan, the great Irish tenor, harmonized on *Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral* and yes, again, I sang *Pennies From Heaven*, the last two as a tribute to the great Bing Crosby."

Now I have a confession to make. I'm really not 20 years old. I certainly wish I were though! I think Regis shaved the 12 years off of my actual age as a result of my mentioning to him that I'd been collecting Bing Crosby memorabilia for over 20 years during that phone conversation in February. It was very kind of him to give me a nod in his notes, and proves once again what a genuinely nice, humble man he really is.



Regis has been busy promoting his album on various television programs and in the press throughout September and October, always mentioning Bing and what a great influence he was on him. It was nice hearing Bing's name being bandied about on such shows as *Larry King Live*, *Good Morning America* and *The View*. I can wholeheartedly recommend this album. Regis has a pleasant voice, and croons these standards with ease. If you'd like to purchase a copy, it should be available in all of the larger record store chains in the US, or online at www.regiscd.com for around $13.99.

Greg Van Beek

Bing collectibles

Priscilla Koernig has drawn our attention to some collectibles which may be of interest to our members.

First of all, there are several *White Christmas* themed items. An ornament (pictured) which sells for $29, a Water Globe ($50), a puzzle ($15) and Christmas cards ($12.95). Available from Betty's Attic, P. O. Box 25600, Bradenton, FL 34206, USA (Tel. 1-800-294-4068, www.bettysattic.com).

Secondly, remember the animatronic dolls that came out a year or two ago? They are available again for $39 each from Robert S. Ensler, P. O. Box 370084, Las Vegas, NV 89137-0084, USA

(www.robertsenslerpresents.com)

Finally, in the UK, Des Campkin tells me that the Bing 'Santa Claus' doll see belowis being offered this year in the *Focus* catalogue for £25 (see also www.focusdiy.co.uk). (See below)

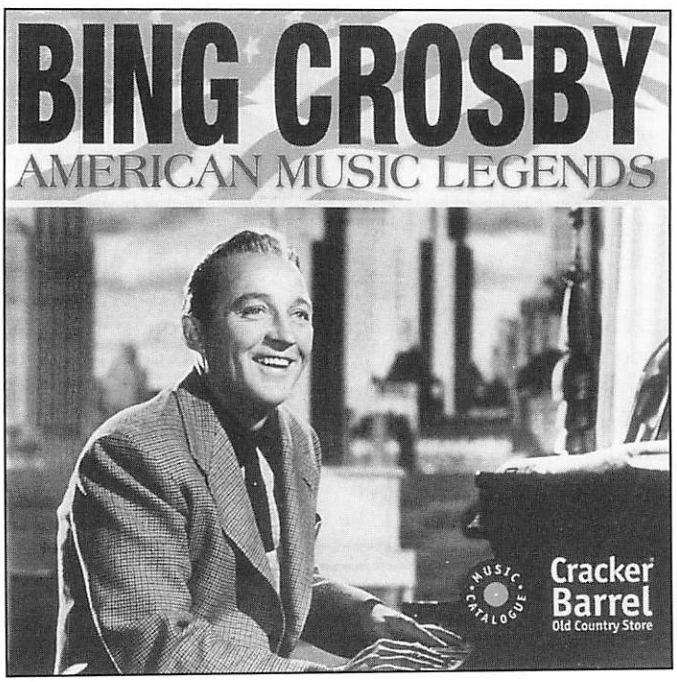
WIG'S WORDS

UNIVERSAL SPECIAL PRODUCTS AGAIN

My good friend., Bob Zipkin, Vice President for Special Products Sales at Universal Music in California, has produced another Bing CD for a nationwide chain known as the Cracker Barrel Old Country Store group, which has locations throughout the United States. This type of direct marketing for budget CDs is becoming quite common these days, as sales in traditional music stores continue to decline across the country.

Titled "Bing Crosby-American Music Legends", this new CD is part of a special Cracker Barrel series honoring top artists of the past, or in their own words: "It's our way of paying tribute to some of America's greatest singers, songwriters and musicians." This ten track compilation features some of Bing's best known Decca recordings, including "Swinging On A Star", "San Fernando Valley", "Pennies From Heaven", "Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate The Positive", "Personality", "I'll Be Seeing You", "(Get Your Kicks On) Route 66", "Some Enchanted Evening", "You Are My Sunshine" and "Oh! What A Beautiful Mornin'". None are new to CD, but at least "Personality" and "Route 66" have not been reissued that often before.

I wish I could tell club members where to find a copy of this new CD, but unless you have a Cracker Barrel Old Country Store in your area, I am afraid you may be out of luck. In any event, the Universal catalog number is B-0002542 to help in your search. My thanks to Bob Zipkin for enabling me to inform ICC members about this unusual Bing CD, and for his continuing efforts to help keep Bing's recordings available through Universal's budget series.



BING'S DECCA JAZZ CD REAPPEARS

Back in 1991, Universal Music (then known as MCA Records) released a 20 track CD on their Decca Jazz label containing Bing's most outstanding jazz-oriented recordings from his Decca years. Recorded with such fellow artists as Connee Boswell, Louis Armstrong, Lionel Hampton, Woody Herman, Louis Jordan, Bob Crosby's Bob Cats and Eddie Condon, this special set included several alternate takes and previously unissued sides, and it remains to this day a much sought after CD for Crosby collectors worldwide.

I have recently been informed by my friend and fellow ICC member, Harvey Sheirr of New York City, that this hard-to-find CD entitled "Bing Crosby And Some Jazz Friends (The Original Decca Recordings)" is a featured selection of the nationwide mail order organization Jazz Heritage Society in its latest catalog for its members.

It is reassuring to find one of Bing's indispensable CDs from the past honored in this manner. It doesn't happen very often these days, but it's a pleasure to take notice when it does. By the way, the original catalog number of this CD was GRD-603, and it remains the only source on compact disc for a number of its tracks. This collection is still a winner, any way that you look at it. Interested members can reach the Jazz Heritage Society on the web at www.jazzheritage.com.

BING DOWN UNDER - IN A GOOD CAUSE

I recently received a pleasant letter from a lady in Cooranbong, New South Wales in far-off Australia asking if I could help her find cassette copies of Bing's recordings of "The Small One" and "The Happy Prince". She said that she remembered them fondly from the 1950s and wanted to be able to play them for her grandson. I was, of course, pleased to send her a tape of the two stories, as well as additional tapes of Bing's other children's stories, "How Lovely Is Christmas", "All Baba", "Never Be Afraid", "Jack B. Nimble", "Ichabod" and "The Man Without A Country".

In response, she wrote that she was stunned to receive such a wonderful collection and just wanted me to know that she and her daughter considered themselves very fortunate that her grandson would now be able to enjoy all of Bing's stories as he grew up. She added that he had just recovered from pneumococcal disease contracted at his day care center, and that she and her daughter would eventually be proud to tell him how, "thanks to a special person he came to receive the tapes". Needless to say, it was a privilege to be able to provide them.

BING SAVES ANOTHER WEDDING

A telephone call from a mother out in Arizona asked if it might be possible to obtain a copy of Bing's Decca recording of "The One Rose". She said that this had been the favorite song of herself and her husband when they were young, but their copy had long since been lost.

Now her daughter was about to be married and she had asked her parents if they would be willing to lead off the wedding reception by dancing once again to "their song". As usual, I was pleased to send her a cassette tape containing not only "The One Rose" but several other ballads Bing recorded for Decca in the mid-1930s. I understand that Bing's songs—and her parents' dancing—were a big hit at the wedding. Just another example of how Bing's musical legacy continues to have such a marvelous effect in so many ways after all of these years.

THE ITALIAN BING CROSBY

I have previously mentioned in BING that one of my wife Laura's favorite singers is Carlo Buti, who was perhaps Italy's most popular vocalist from the 1930s to the 1950s. Born in Florence in November 1902 (some six months before Bing), Carlo Buti became a favorite of the Italian theater circuit while still in his early twenties, with a lyrical tenor voice especially suited to the popular Italian songs of the day, especially romantic ballads. By 1930, he also had become a radio and recording star as well, and he later appeared in a number of successful Italian musical films.

Carlo Buti toured in the United States to considerable acclaim in 1938 and 1939, and again after World War II in 1948 and 1949. He starred in a sold-out concert at New York's Carnegie Hall during his 1949 tour. Buti's active career continued through the mid-1950's until his retirement in 1956. He passed away in 1963 at 61 years of age. Changes in musical tastes since his death have dimmed the memory of Carlo Buti's artistry both in Italy and abroad. But, fortunately, many of the best of his hundreds of recordings (for the Italian Columbia label) are now available on compact disc.

An excellent compilation was issued in 2002 to celebrate the centennial of Carlo Buti's birth by the Living Era label in the United Kingdom, entitled "Carlo Buti - Bella Regazza" (Pretty Girl) containing 23 of his most popular songs recorded from 1934 through 1949 (CD AJA-5448). For those who enjoy the long melodic lines of modern Italian ballads beautifully sung by a highly accomplished tenor with perfect enunciation and the ability to reach easily into the falsetto range, Carlo Buti cannot be equalled in my opinion. Just try the Living Era CD, and I am confident that you will be greatly impressed with his unique artistry.

But, you may well ask, what does all of this have to do with Bing Crosby? Was Carlo Buti's voice anything like Bing's? Did he record any of Bing's songs? The answer to these latter two questions is "no". So why have I written an endorsement of a largely forgotten Italian singer for this issue of BING? Well, there was a connection—or at least a comparison—of Bing and Carlo once reported in an American newspaper. Laura found this in a biography of Buti I had given her, and I thought it worth sharing with Club Crosby members along with these words about his career. Here is the text of that brief, and somewhat amusing, article, as it appeared in the New York Daily Mirror of March 4, 1949:

Buti, Bing Have Much In Common

When you hear Carlo Buti, the Italian golden-voiced crooner featured at Broadway's Iceland Restaurant, you can understand why he's called the 'Bing Crosby of Italy'. They both have the same casual crooning style that's easy on the eyes and ears and are in the same middle-aged bracket that's written finis to many other careers. And where Bing is a top radio, film and record favorite over here, Buti duplicates that in Italy.

Both had the same humble beginnings, Bing sang in the honky-tonks and Buti sang in nameless village taverns. Bing got his first break in a trio with Paul Whiteman's orchestra. Carlo in a quartet that toured Italy's theaters. Of course, they differ in some respects. The Groaner would rather play golf than sing; the golden crooner would rather sing than play golf. Bing's family of four youngsters is no match for Buti's. Carlo has four thousand—Italian war orphans he personally adopted after the war. Part of his earnings each week go toward their support.

So, if you are even a little impressed with this kind of indirect Crosby-Buti connection (or even if you aren't), I suggest that you give a listen to Bing's so-called Italian counterpart. I think you will be pleased to experience a different type of popular music from the era of Bing's greatest stardom. You won't hear the likes of "Swinging On A Star" or "White Christmas", but you will be in for a wonderful listening experience. Laura and I guarantee it!

A DEFINITIVE BIOGRAPHY OF RUSS COLUMBO

A thoroughly-researched biography of Bing's early rival, Russ Columbo, has been written by fellow ICC member Tony Toran of Florida, which will be published in early 2005 by BearManor Media. Those who attended the Hofstra Conference in November 2002 will recall that Tony Toran presented a conference paper highlighting the careers of the two "Battling Baritones" between 1931 and 1934, until the death of Columbo in a bizarre shooting accident.

Entitled "A PRISONER OF LOVE" (one of Columbo's top recordings for RCA Victor), this new book will feature extensive interviews and many previously-unavailable documents and photographs about his brief, meteoric career. As many Crosby collectors have long included Russ Columbo's rare recordings in their music libraries, this biography—with its detailed Crosby-Columbo comparisons during the early 1930s—should be of particular interest to ICC members.

Ordering details, including a special discount for ICC club members, will be distributed with the Spring 2005 issue of BING.

HAIL AND FAREWELL—AT LEAST FOR NOW

My first article written for BING was published in issue #106, way back in the Spring of 1994. Since that time, more than a decade has passed, during which my primary purpose has been to share with other ICC members news of important developments involving

Bing that have occurred in the United States. Now that the American and British Crosby clubs have joined together, other American members are providing substantial contributions to our magazine from this side of the Atlantic.

Accordingly, I have come to the conclusion that it is no longer essential for me to submit a regular article for every issue of BING, rather that I should defer to the "newer folks" who are anxious to write about their own Crosby activities for the magazine. This, therefore, is the last regular edition of "Wig's Words" as such. I still may write an occasional future article when the subject warrants. But, for now, Laura and I would just like to say "so long" to the readers of BING. and to thank all of you for your many comments and kindnesses over these past years. It has been a sincere pleasure to share our thoughts about Bing with you through these pages. And thanks also to Bing, who has made it all possible.

F. B. (Wig) Wiggins
October 10, 2004

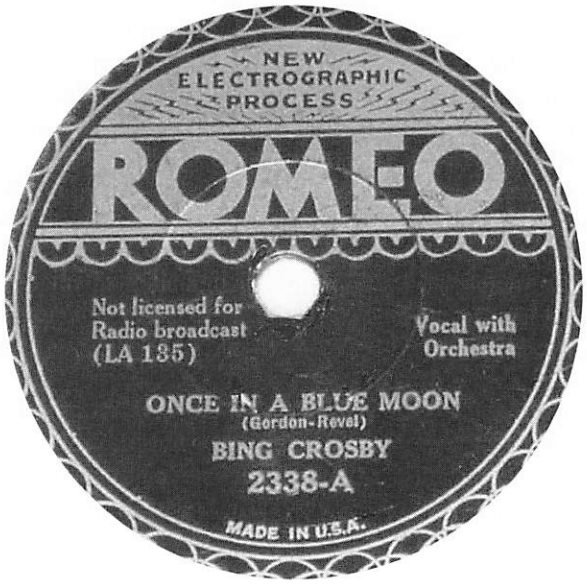
(Editor: It is with some sadness that I received Wig's decision to cease his regular articles but I fully understand his reasoning. Way back in 1994, the former International Crosby Circle badly needed news from the USA and Wig willingly steeped into the breach. With the merger with Club Crosby and with the marvellous Bing Crosby Internet Museum, it has become far easier to glean information about Bing related activities. Our thanks go to Wig for his articles over the years and we look forward to further submissions from him when something appropriate turns up.)

LOOKING BACK: BING'S AMERICAN BRUNSWICKS

This article originally appeared in the October 1980 issue of BINGANG. It has been extensively revised and edited for reprinting in this issue of BING.

The inexperienced collector may ask "How many records did Bing Crosby make for Melotone. . . or Vocalion . . . or Perfect?" The answer is "none." Nor did he record for Conqueror, Romeo, Banner, or Oriole, although his records appear on all of these labels. These sides were made for American Brunswick. Although corporate histories are not usually very interesting, an understanding of the Brunswick story is essential to explain the multitude of labels used for Bing's recordings made between 1931 and 1934.

During the first year of the Great Depression, the Brunswick-Balke-Collender Company, a manufacturer of bowling lanes and other equipment, sold its faltering record division to the Warner Brothers movie studios. Brunswick had made records since the acoustical days and had acquired Vocalion as a subsidiary. The company did well in the record business until the Great Crash of 1929 and along with Victor and Columbia made up the Big Three of the business.

Warner Brothers had ambitious plans for their new enterprise and signed up a number of Hollywood stars to bolster the sales of the 75-cent Brunswicks. The best thing they did was to sign up a young singer named Bing Crosby, who made his first Brunswick recording on March 30, 1931. However, it was a bad time to be in the record business. Sales were very slow, and even the introduction of the cheaper Melotone label and the services of Bing Crosby did not prevent the brothers Warner from deciding that they could better invest their money elsewhere.

Now the American Record Corporation (a subsidiary of Consolidated Films) comes upon the scene. ARC had been doing a respectable business pressing inexpensive records for the various chain stores, using labels it had acquired from various sources after the depression struck. These included Banner, Conqueror, Oriole, Perfect, and Romeo. Brunswick, Melotone, and Vocalion were added to the roster when Warner Brothers sold out the record division of Brunswick Radio Corporation to ARC in late 1931.

Brunswick, with its attractive, somewhat old-fashioned black and gold label, was used as the prestige line for ARC, still selling for 75 cents. Many of the Brunswick recordings, including Bing's, were re-pressed on the cheaper labels mentioned above, to be distributed by the chain stores or sold as a less expensive product in the record shops.

It should be pointed out, though, that the masters

made by Warner Bros prior to the sale of the business to ARC were not sold along with the business. They were instead leased to ARC, who used them to repress Bing's and other performers' earlier recordings.

In the meantime the Columbia Phonograph Company had also fallen upon bad times, and in 1934 it too was sold to ARC, bringing the Columbia, Okeh, and Harmony labels into the fold. ARC thus found itself with two of the three major record companies under its control. Apparently ARC already had all the record labels it needed and mostly ignored Columbia's contributions.

Another group seeking to buy Columbia Records in 1934 had comprised the British entrepreneur, Ted Lewis, founder of the Decca Record Company Limited of England, Jack Kapp, Bing's record producer and a Brunswick Records executive, and attorney Milton Diamond. The three men were dining at Diamond's house in New York on July 6, 1934 when the news came through that Columbia Records had been sold. Here's what Mr. Lewis had to say in his autobiography:

> We decided there and then to form a new record company. Jack Kapp was certain that he could bring over Bing Crosby and there was, I believe, a clause in his contract under which if Kapp ceased to be associated with the Brunswick Company the contract would become null and void. Obviously the new company must be a Decca company, with the Decca label, which we believed would become quickly known provided Bing Crosby's recordings appeared on it, to say nothing of other leading popular artists, including Guy Lombardo, The Boswell Sisters, The Mills Brothers, and The Casa Loma Orchestra. Jack Kapp explained that there was a possibility of making a deal with Warners to take over their record plant on West 54th Street, with about 35 presses and ancillary equipment, recording studios and offices at 799 Seventh Avenue. Only a small production was being carried out at the plant in transcriptions for radio stations on 16-inch discs.
>
> The problem of personnel could be readily solved, with E. F. Stevens, Junr., who he believed was ready to leave Columbia and join as sales manager, and Milton Rackmil from Brunswick as treasurer and production supervisor. Other experienced men were available for key posts, including those of branch managers in Chicago, Los Angeles and New Orleans. Never had the possibility occurred before of starting a record company with so many pieces in the jigsaw fitting so perfectly into position.
>
> The question then arose as to the price or prices at which the new Decca records would be marketed. Jack Kapp wanted to follow the existing pattern with 75, 35 and 25 cent records and argued vehemently for this set-up. I could see no hope of success for such a policy. The total sales of records in America were then no greater than ten million and for us to succeed we had not only to capture some of those sales but also to increase the total volume. I insisted that only on the basis of a one price 35 cent record could we agree to go ahead; and as we were to supply the trademark and the finance it could never have been formed without us. I argued that at 35 cents not only would we take business from competitors but would almost inevitably increase the over-all turnover of the industry at the very moment when it seemed that it might well have touched bottom. There was in those days a small, gross profit on a 35 cent record, and whilst it was unlikely that Victor, Columbia or Brunswick would cut their first line records to 35 cents, even if they did we would be fighting them on equal terms, with top line artists. The possibility of our being undercut was out of the question, for the 25 cent record was only a commercial proposition through chain stores with non-royalty artists.
>
> ...Although most people thought that radio had killed the record industry which in the U.S.A. had slumped from a total of over 100,000,000 records in 1928 to some 10,000,000 by 1933,1 doubt whether any company started at such a propitious moment. Most new companies are formed in the last stage of a boom. American Decca was started at the end of an unparalleled slump
>
> ...Of the 20,000 shares which the English company subscribed for at $1 each, we arranged to give 1,250 to Jack Kapp and 750 to Stevens, each of whom signed a service agreement.
>
> (E. R. Lewis, writing in his book *No C.I.C*)

Bing Crosby made the last of his 107 Brunswick sides on July 5, 1934. Decca Records was incorporated on August 4 with Bing making his first recording for them on August 8. Although this was the end of Bing's American Brunswick recordings, it was not the end of the variety of labels associated with them. Around 1937 the Brunswick label became black and silver, with a row of vertical bars vaguely resembling organ pipes, replacing the elegant black and gold label and its fancy ornamentation. Many of Bing's records were repressed in black and silver.

By 1938 the economic climate had improved, and the Columbia Broadcasting System bought the entire ARC operation. This eventually caused a major shakeup in labeling, The Brunswick label was cast aside for the Columbia sticker. The reason for that is not difficult to figure out. Okeh, sporting a label in a color I believe is called "puce" was revived to replace Vocalion, but the numbering series was retained from the latter. Repressings of Vocalion reissues were made with the Okeh logo. That is why you can find many of Bing's 78s on both labels with the same record number. Other labels in the ARC group were dropped.

Sometime in the forties the lease covering the pre-ARC masters expired or was cancelled, and Decca Records permanently acquired the rights to the Brunswick masters that were made during the Warner era. Decca issued a "Collector's Series" which included two four-record albums by Bing. Similar reissues were also made for other performers. All of these were pressed with a black and gold Brunswick label quite different from the original one.

Not to be outdone, Columbia dug through the Brunswick masters that were made after the ARC takeover and issued two 78 rpm albums of "Crosby Classics," using its own green label. The first Crosby

LP ever issued was a ten-incher, also called "Crosby Classics," and was released by Columbia (CL-6027). There were, of course, many LPs issued by Decca and other companies that featured recordings from the Brunswick era.

The CD era has also been kind to Bing's Brunswicks. These recordings are all out of copyright in practically every country but the U.S.A., and the list of CDs available featuring this material is very impressive. And don't forget that the wonderful Jonzo series contains every recording made for Brunswick - and alternate takes too!

The American Brunswick recordings are of much interest because they show a great singer in the process of developing the style that was to be uniquely his. The voice was higher and lighter in those days, and there were occasionally rough edges around the tones which were smoothed out later on. Bing himself in his autobiography *Call Me Lucky* speaks of the "frogs" in his voice in his recordings of the thirties. In spite of this, many collectors consider Bing's Brunswicks to be the best of all; others prefer the blue label Deccas or earlier or later recordings. Everybody is entitled to his or her own preferences!

THIS COPYRIGHT RECORD MAY NOT BE SOLD BELOW THE PRICE FIXED BY THE MANUFACTURER NOR PUBLICLY PERFORMED
Brunswick
CAMPBELL CONNELLY
(D.L.A.2286)
03185-A
YOU'RE DANGEROUS
(From Bing Crosby's film "Road to Zanzibar")
BING CROSBY
(Accompanied by John Scott-Trotter & his Orchestra)
BRUNSWICK LTD
MADE IN ENGLAND

One more note: The American Brunswick records were all issued in the U.K. on what was then called the "English Brunswick" label. Ted Lewis's Decca company had purchased the British arm of the Brunswick Radio Corporation from Warner Brothers in 1932 and after the formation of American Decca, Lewis continued to issue Bing's new Decca recordings in the UK on the British Brunswick label.

Wayne L. Martin

Bing's Autograph (or not?)

Bob Conrad sends an important warning.

During the past few years a number of photographs and LP record covers sporting forged Bing Crosby autographs have appeared on a number of Internet auction sites. Most of these are obvious fakes, even to the untrained eye, while a few others are frighteningly good. This past summer has seen this take a sharp increase reaching almost epidemic heights on eBay. I advise club members to take the time to study authentic Bing Crosby signatures before purchasing or bidding on such items.

First, hopefully we all know that many of Bing's Decca albums have a printed signature on their covers. Single albums taken from the Musical Autobiography box set all feature this printed signature. His Decca Christmas album features a printed signature, as well as the soundtrack album to *The Road to Hong Kong*. Be aware that Bing's autograph varied little over the years. When scrutinizing a signature, make sure the loop on the stem of the "B" is present, and that the counter-clockwise circle at the top of the "C" is large. Also, be on guard for signatures where the "B" connects to the "i" with a half-circle along the base line — Bing never did this — he would create a backwards loop connecting the bottom of the "B" all the way to the top of the "i". As I mentioned earlier, known examples of his signature vary little, so be on the lookout for any discrepancies, and treat each offender as suspect.

Also, keep in mind that Bing never used the word "sincerest" when signing items. In fact, to the best of my knowledge, the word "sincerest" does not even exist in the English language, a fact Bing no doubt would have known. Many American West Coast dealers are attempting to sell albums purportedly signed by Bing using the greeting "Sincerest wishes". All I can say is Rubbish! if I may borrow a term from my fellow club members across the Atlantic.

The ultimate forgery (both in technique and in sheer stupidity) has occurred this month (September) on eBay. An autograph dealer located in Cyprus is auctioning off what he claims to be a genuine autograph of Bing Crosby on the cover of the Seasons (Polydor) LP. The fake autograph on this item is quite believable in every way except for one small detail: Bing was dead when this album was released. In fact, if the forger had taken the time to turn the album over he (or she) certainly would have noticed the rear liner notes mentioning that the album is the last commercial recording by Bing Crosby, meaning he was deceased. The only way he could have actually signed this album is if he had risen from the grave, which unfortunately and quite unlike Elvis, he never did.

So please take the time to become acquainted with Bing's signature before spending your hard-earned cash on an item with questionable provenance. Certificates of Authenticity (COAs) are nothing more than a piece of paper signed by the seller of the item stating he believes the item to be genuine. It is worthless and meaningless, regardless of the reputation of the seller. If the seller can't spot a forged Bing Crosby signature, then he obviously doesn't deserve to have a positive reputation in the autograph collector's community.

If you spot a fake, then complain. Complain to the owner of the gallery or store. Complain to the Internet auction site. Complain to www.ic3.gov (the Internet Crime Complaint Center) and complain to your both your local authorities and the seller's local authorities.

Only then can we begin to purge these con artists from our society. But it can't be done unless each and every one of you takes the time to complain. If we were to sit back and do nothing, we are not saying "look at me, I'm smart enough not to be taken in by such a trick," no, we are in fact saying, "you won't get my money but go ahead and rip off my neighbor and friends."

Bob Conrad
Fort Lee, NJ

(Editor: Thanks, Bob for pointing out the potential pitfalls here and that's good advice you are giving us. Members can usually find Bing's signature on a letter on the inside back cover of each issue of this magazine.)

Bing's Questionnaire

An unusual item being offered on eBay in August at an initial asking price of $20 was described as a rare and unique 4-page typed questionnaire filled out in pencil by Bing. The questionnaire had come from the estate of Hy Gardner (1908-1989), a renowned syndicated columnist and radio & TV interviewer. Mr. Gardner had written to Bing on March 20, 1959 as follows:

> Dear Bing:
> I'm doing a series which I think can be inspirational to a great many Americans over the age of fifty. I'm polling national figures in an effort to get the answers to some of the problems that confront the average man or woman past the half-century mark, and perhaps going into the sixties. It has always been an axiom in show business and, oddly enough, in public life for famous people to remain active and look and feel and act even younger than their counterparts out of the glare of the public spotlight. I wonder if, when you get the chance, you would dictate answers to the questions enclosed. I'd appreciate it very much.
> All the best regards.

Bing duly filled in the questionnaire and here are his fascinating answers in italics.

1. What is your present age? *54*
2. What keeps you looking and feeling so young? *I don't know what I look like, but I feel ancient*
3. How much sleep do you get out of the average 24 hours? *7 hrs*
4. Is it good or fitful sleep? *Broken*
5. Do you require barbiturates or any other sleep inducing liquid or drug? *only in noisy hotels*
6. How much sleep do you think you need? *7 hrs*
7. What about daytime naps? *I like to stretch out in mid-afternoon if only for 15 minutes - think this refreshes one*
8. Any nervousness in connection with an appearance, important meeting, etc.? *no*
9. Do you control your temper more now than when you were younger? *I only lose my temper on the golf course. But not nearly as much as I used to*
10. What do you worry about most? *My children*
11. How frequently and thoroughly do you get a physical check-up? *once a year*
12. Do any exercise? *swim golf ride*
13. Are you impatient with new friends and prefer the old ones? *Don't care if they're new or old as long as they are tolerant*
14. Are you on any special diet? *Yes, I have a history of kidney stones and should avoid foods of high calcium content*
15. How much weight have you lost or gained in the past five years? *Stay the same - 162lbs*
16. What do you do for relaxation? *read - movies - T.V*
17. At what age do you think, if it is financially feasible, the average citizen should retire? *When it's financially feasible and when he's lost his zest for his work*
18. Are you bitter about anything? *no*
19. Do you use alcohol? *Yes*
20. Do you resent younger people coming up in your profession or business? *of course not*
21. Have you any objection to taking direction from these younger people? *of course not*
22. Why is a male star even in his late fifties still attractive to young girls? *Is that so?*
23. Does reading the obituary column slow you down? *Gives you pause for thought*
24. What younger people coming up in your own special category would you consider might someday be the grand old stars of 1975? *Debbie Reynolds Jack Lemmon Bob Wagner Gary Crosby*
25. Do you watch much TV and, if so, what do you enjoy most? *Watch it a great deal - Sports Shows - Playhouse 90 - See it Now - Belafonte*
26. Do you ever expect to retire? *Mais oui*

Typical Bing humour evident, especially in his answer to question 22. The questionnaire eventually sold for $59 to one of our members.

Christmas Greetings From The Crosby's

Greg Van Beek takes a look at Bing's Christmas cards.

With the Christmas Season once again upon us, and with most of us completing the task of writing out Christmas cards to family and friends, I thought it would be a good time to take a look back at how the Crosby Family's Christmas cards looked during the 1960's and 1970's. Specifically, cards sent out between the years of 1963 and 1976.

If you were lucky enough to be counted amongst Bing's family or friends during that time, you would've received a similarly styled card each year. Each measured 6 1/2" x 7 1/2" closed, and 7 1/2" x 10 1/2" open. They all featured a different color photo of the family on the front cover. Beginning in 1970, the photo was taken on the set of their annual Christmas television special. In 1976, there were two photos included. The one on the outside cover was of Bing alone, on stage at the London Palladium. Inside the front cover, was a photo of Kathryn Crosby and their children on the same stage.

The cards were printed on heavy white paper, with gold embossed lettering inside. So now let's remember Christmases past with these cherished mementos from the world's premiere yuletide song stylist.

A

Holy and Blessed

Christmas

Kathryn, Bing, Harry

Mary Frances, Nathaniel

and Remus Crosby

TRADING POST

Entries are free for all items of Crosbyana and there is a nominal charge of $3 or £2 for non-Crosby advertisements. All items are printed in good faith and we cannot accept responsibility for any dissatisfaction arising from the transaction as a result of these entries
Please send all advertisements to the Editor

Anderson Publishing, 102 Boyce Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario, K2H 6J2, Canada. [Phone (613) 721-0811, e-mail: Rosemary@anderpub.com].

Gord Atkinson's *The Crosby Years* series remains available. US and Canadian members can obtain the CDs for $24.00 US for 2 CDs and $13.00 for one CD which includes postage. Canadian purchasers should pay CAN $30.00 for 2 CDs and CAN $16.00 for one CD. Payment can be made by check, Visa or MasterCard. Please note that USA members may send US dollar checks to Anderson Publishing.

UK, Irish and European members who wish to obtain the CDs should contact Malcolm Macfarlane. The CDs cost £15.99 for two, £8.99 for one.

David Austin, by e-mail.

"My father Stanley John Austin, was a founder member of the ICC, but unfortunately he passed away on the 9th July 2004. My mother wishes to dispose of his large collection of 78s and LPs, many of which are of Bing Crosby and contemporary artists. She would ideally like to dispose of the collection as one transaction, and doesn't really mind how much it goes for, if it will be treasured by another Bing enthusiast. It would need to be collected from her house in Bournemouth.

Will anybody interested please contact my mother, Mrs Irene Austin on 01202 579164 (69 East Howe Lane, Kinson, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH 10 5HZ UK) or myself by e-mail daustin@maxnet.co.nz for a list of items."

Bert Bishop, Tideway, 100 Imperial Avenue, Maylandsea, Chelmsford, Essex CM3 6AJ, UK (Tel: 01621 742144)

Bert has a spare copy of the U.S.A. release of the film RIDING HIGH [Region 1] and offers it for £12.50 including postage in the UK.

Also Bert is seeking the Fred Reynolds set of books *The Crosby Collection* for a friend. Can anyone help?

Festival Films, 6115 Chestnut Terrace, Shorewood, MN 55331, USA (Tel. & Fax: (952) 470-2172, e-mail: Fesfilms@aol.com)

Ron Hall at Festival Films can meet all your requirements for Bing on DVD and video. See also www.FesFilms.com

Jan Fleshman, 311P Old McCloud Rd., Mt. Shasta, CA 96067, USA (Tel: [530] 918-9452, e-mail drhaven@earthlink.net)

Jan is offering the collection of her late husband, Sam Fleshman, for sale. It comprises 410 78rpm (many in albums), 34 10" LPs in their original covers, 521 12" LPs including the Chronological series, 136 pieces of sheet music, 181 movies on video, 105 CDs, approx. 60 books, 175+ cassettes, 2 Crosby dolls plus pictures and other miscellaneous memorabilia. PRICE $3,000

Footlight Records, 113 East 12th St., New York, NY 10003, USA (Tel: (212) 533-1572, Fax: (212) 673-1496, e-mail: footlight1@aol.com)

For your Bing needs on CD and Vinyl. See also www.footlight.com

Ralph Harding, "Crosbyana", 67 Shirley Drive, Heolgerrig, Merthyr Tydfil, Mid-Glamorgan, S. Wales CF48 1SE, UK

Ralph has the following CDs for sale at £3 each. Postage extra. None of the CDs has ever been played and are brand new.

Newsound NSTX 002 Christmas With Bing Crosby (Bing: 18 tracks)

Music Bank APWCD 8004 White Christmas Bing Crosby (Bing: 21 tracks)

Music Bank APWCD 8006 Three Stars At Christmas (Bing: 8 tracks)

AMCOS RX 1032 The Essential Bing Crosby (Bing: 18 tracks)

Master Sound 501352 We Wish You A Merry Christmas (Bing: 3 tracks)

Master Sound 502562 Christmas With The Stars (Bing: 3 tracks)

Master Sound 503072 I'll Be Home For Christmas (Bing: 2 tracks)

Newsound NSTX 007 Crooners At Christmas (Bing: 3 tracks)

Newsound NSTX 014 It's A Wonderful Christmas (Bing: 4 tracks)

Newsound NSTX 015 It's Another Wonderful Christmas (Bing: 7 tracks)

Music Bank APWCD 1234 Legends 3 (Bing: 2 tracks)

Rajon RMGRO 240 Bing Crosby Swinging On A Star (2 CDs, Bing: 36 tracks) £7.50

Cedar 634585 The Crooners (2 CDs, 41 tracks, Bing: 10 tracks) £7.50

Mike Kaptanis, 64 Kingsley Drive, Yonkers, New York 10710, USA (e-mail: mmgkaptan@aol.com. Tel: (Home) (914) 779-9728)

"I am offering about 55 black and blue label Decca 78s to whoever wants them and is willing to pay the postage (no other charge). They are all used, varying from "V" to "E" condition. It's a great startup collection for a beginning collector."

Wayne Martin, e-mail: ClubCrosby@aol.com

Wayne has prepared a subject/author index to articles in

BINGANG from 1979 to 2003 and will happily send either a Word file or a WordPerfect file via email to anyone who wants it free of charge.

Malcolm Macfarlane, e-mail: Macwilmslo@aol.com

Encouraged by Wayne Martin's example (see above), I have prepared an index to the articles in BING magazine from our re-launch as a glossy in 1989 to date. Free to anyone who wants it in a Word document by email. Can also send it in RichText Format if that would help. Will have to charge £2 (inc. postage) for paper copies.

The Record Centre, 45-46 Loveday St., Birmingham B4 6NR, UK (Tel: 0121-359-7399, e-mail: Raypurslow@blueyonder.co.uk)

Ray Purslow and his team are real supporters of the Crosby cause and for your Bing CDs (and LPs) contact Ray.

Select Circles, P. O. Box 302, Riverside, CT 06878, USA (Phone: 203-661-8421)

Select Circles have a large stock of Bing CDs. Write or call for information.

Stan Wootton, 60 The Bridle, Glen Parva, Leicester LE2 9HQ, UK (Phone: 0116-2772454, e-mail: Stanley28Gordon@aol.com)

Stan offers the 1973 BBC series "The Bing Crosby Story" on CD. One CD for each of the fourteen programmes, cost £5 per CD or three for £14, including postage in the UK. Stan will provide any future discs you require to complete your collection in any quality you would care to order at a later date. Please make cheques payable to S. Wootton.

BING BINDERS

Keep your magazines in mint condition by storing them in these specially made binders. They have blue covers with BING in gold on the spine and hold 10 copies, which allow them to either be inserted or removed, yet also open flat for easy reading. Costing £6.99 inc postage, £7.99 to Europe, £8.99 elsewhere, they are available from Ken Mason, 12 Wycomb Grove, Melton Mowbray, Leics. LE13 1EQ

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Crosby Clubs Around The World

The ICC is pleased to be associated with the following Crosby organisations.

Bing's Friends And Collectors Society,

Hobie and Cathie Wilson, 236 Andrieux St., Sonoma, California 95476-6909, USA (tel. [707] 996-0257 - e-mail bingsfriends81@netzero.com)

The Victorian Bing Crosby Society

Bob Neate, 22 Pakenham St., Blackburn, Victoria, Australia 3130. (tel. [03] 9877 1983)

Internet sites:

Bing Crosby Internet Museum: www.kcmetro.edu/~crosby/

This is a wonderful site which carries up-to-date news and has a lively discussion board. Not to be missed by those on the net.

The Immortal Talents of Bing Crosby

http://www.geocities.com/BourbonStreet/3754/bing.html

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OTHER APPRECIATION SOCIETIES

We have reciprocal arrangements with the following clubs and societies for publicity purposes. They kindly advertise our club in their magazines and we are very pleased to return the favour.

In Tune International, 10 Collingwood Drive, Mundesley, Norfolk NR11 8JB, UK (phone/fax: 01263 722818,

e-mail: gerry.stonestreet@virgin.net,

website: www.GnuDawn.co.uk/intune)

Described as the magazine for lovers of the golden age of popular music, this excellent periodical contains 40 pages about nostalgic and easy listening music. Subscriptions, which cover six issues, are £17.40 for the UK, £19.80 for Europe and £26.40 for the rest of the world. Payment can be made by credit card. Highly recommended.

Memory Lane, P. O. Box 1939, Leigh-on-Sea, SS9 3UH, England.(www.memorylane.org.uk

e-mail: mail@memorylane.org.uk)

Memory Lane is a lively magazine specialising in music of the 1920s through to the 1950s. Although the emphasis is placed on British dance bands and vocalists of the 1930s and 1940s, *Memory Lane* also covers the American scene, jazz, big bands, personalities, music hall and variety artistes. Regular features on Al Bowlly - one of Britain's favourite vocalists. Published quarterly and attractively printed and presented, each edition includes exclusive articles by a team of world-class writers and journalists plus Picture Pages, CD and Cassette reviews, Readers letters, discographical features and the advertisements that you will want to read. A *"must"* for 78 RPM collectors. 3 First Class stamps (or 3 IRCs) will bring a sample copy and full details.

Vintage Record Mart, 'Sarsden', Lower Common, Aylburton, Nr. Lydney, Gloucestershire GL15 6DR, UK

This is a 32 page quarterly trading magazine for collectors of 78s. Annual subscriptions are UK £8, Europe £10.40, USA & Canada £12.20, Australia and New Zealand £12.80.

International Tony Bennett Appreciation Society, c/o Mark Fox, 15 Kilpin Hill Lane, Staincliffe, West Yorkshire, WF13 4BG, UK (phone: 01924 401909, e-mail: markfoxtbas@hotmail.com).

Pat Boone Appreciation Society, P. O. Box 63, Sunderland, SR1 1PN, UK

Eddie Cantor Appreciation Society, c/o Michelle Malik, 14611 Valley Vista Blvd., Sherman Oaks, CA 91403, USA (email: cantorfan@aol.com

website: http://www.eddiecantor.com/)

Rosemary Clooney, http://www.rosemaryclooney.com/

The Doris Day Society, 31 Kirkfield Rise, Ambleside, Cumbria LA22 9DX, UK

The Deanna Durbin Society, c/o Denis Holland, 84A Wolverhampton Rd., Stafford ST17 4AW, UK (phone: 01785 213987).

Dick Haymes Society, c/o Roger L. Dooner, 2951 Tyler St., NE Minneapolis, MN 55418, USA, or Maurice Dunn, 16 Cradley Park Road, Netherton, Dudley West Midlands, DY2 9SR, UK

International Al Jolson Society, c/o John Wehrman, 1195 Hickory Hill Drive, Green Bay, WI 54304, USA (e-mail: JWWehrman@aol.com - web site: http://www.jolson.org/)

Frankie Laine International Appreciation Society, c/o Tony Cooper, 18 Napier Crescent, Seamer, Scarborough, North Yorkshire YO12 4HY, UK (phone / fax 01723 863022 - email: tony@flias.com , website: www.btinternet.com/~flias/)

The Dean Martin Association, P. O. Box 80, Uckfield, East Sussex TN22 1ZR, UK

The International Mills Brothers Society, c/o Daniel Clemson, 604 N. Market St., Mechanicsburg, PA 17055-2727, USA (Phone: (717) 697-4271, e-mail: MillsBros1@aol.com, website: www.millsbrotherssociety.org/)

Nelson Riddle Appreciation Society - Alan Wright, 4 Jardine Cottages, Templewood Lane, Stoke Poges, Bucks SL2 4BQ, UK (Phone / Fax 01753 663869, website: www.btinternet.com/~mike.leach
e-mail: mike.leach@btinternet.com)

Sinatra Music Society - Mrs Margaret Cummings, National Secretary, 36 Hillcrest Rd., Wylde Green, Sutton Coldfield B72 1EN, UK (tel: 0121-350-0683,
website: www.sinatra-ms.com/Sinatra.html)

Sinatra Music Society, Dublin Branch, c/o Chris Hitchcock, 21 Roselawn Walk, Dublin 15, Ireland (phone: 01 8212418)

Kate Smith Commemorative Society, P. O. Box 3575, Cranston, RI 02910, USA (e-mail: pinky@wzrd.com - website: http://katesmith.org/)

Andy Williams Appreciation Society, P. O. Box 5, Westerham, Kent TN16 1UE, UK

Books 'n' Bing

1. Skylark: The Life and Times of Johnny Mercer

by Philip Furia - published by St. Martin's Press, ISBN 0-312-28720-8.

Pete Cakanic mentioned this book in our last issue and thereby encouraged your editor to purchase it. A very well-written look at the life of Johnny Mercer which I thoroughly enjoyed. Mercer's lyrics to so many great songs were truly brilliant and the author quotes from many of them. The book highlights the difference between the charming sober Johnny and the nasty vindictive Mercer when he had taken a few drinks. He never wrote a top Broadway show and apparently this was a real regret for him despite the many hits and Oscar winning songs he had.

Bing is indeed mentioned frequently and here are a couple of extracts.

Johnny and Ginger fell into a hard-drinking crowd that centered on the Crosbys. Because Ginger had dated Bing before she met Johnny, they became friends with him and his wife, Dixie, who as a southerner enjoyed being with Johnny "It was my good fortune to know him when he was married to Dixie and his boys were small," Mercer wrote. "They often rode on my back and I enjoyed the happy days around the track and poolside with this most attractive couple. She was very kind to me, as I was in such awe of him and she knew it." What Mercer loved most about Crosby, even more than his singing, was his hipster talk - "his slang, his ad libs." Mercer's awe at Crosby's stardom must have deepened now that he saw how elusive such success was in Hollywood. (page 84)

This turn in his career came, thanks again, to Bing Crosby. Johnny and Ginger participated in a series of informal minstrel shows put on by the "Westwood Marching and Chowder Club" that were initially staged at Crosby's house. The first show was held on April 16, 1938, and Mercer put on blackface to be one of the end men as Pat O'Brien, Jerry Colonna, and Crosby himself performed comic routines and sang old songs such as "Waiting for the Robert E. Lee." The show was an informal production for themselves and their friends, but, since most of the performers were professionals they were slickly staged affairs, with elaborate costumes, such as Bessie Burke's cowboy chaps with "cutouts to display her buttocks." For white show business people raised on minstrel show traditions and accustomed to black-face performances throughout the 1930s, the racist caricatures in these shows would not have seemed offensive.

Johnny Mercer (far left) at a Westwood Marching and Chowder Club performance watched by the rest of the participants.

The first performance aroused so much interest around Hollywood that a second show was scheduled for June 25, and along with most of the original performers, the cast included Andy Devine, Fred MacMurray, and Bill Frawley (who would go on to play Fred Mertz on television's *I Love Lucy).* A small band was also brought in that included Tommy Dorsey and Spike Jones. Mercer later fondly recalled these early Westwood Marching and Chowder Club shows. . . "It was all very spontaneous," Ginger recalled, "and as usual those are much more fun than when they get too well rehearsed." But one wonders if she was expressing Johnny's feeling, more than her own. She seems to have loved sitting quietly to the side and taking in all the glitz and glamour. . . The Westwood minstrels printed up programs and had large glossy photographs taken of themselves performing and watching one another perform, drinks in hand. These shows brought Bob Hope and Crosby together, and there was even talk at one point of filming one of them for Paramount. For Savannah-bred Mercer, that was going too far in mixing one's private and public lives.

The highlight of this second show, however, was a duet between Crosby and Mercer that Mercer had written as a blackface parody of the old ethnic vaudeville act "Mr Gallagher and Mr. Shean." As "Lasses Mercer" and "Chitlins Crosby," he and Bing provided an "erudite analyseration of swing." Crosby had recently been given an honorary degree by Gonzaga University in his hometown of Spokane. Washington, and Mercer addresses him with mock deference as Crosby hums and scats:

Oh, Mr. Crosby, Dear Dr. Crosby,

Is it true that swing's another name for jazz?

And the first place it was played

Was a New Orleans parade

And the Southern Negro gave it all it has?

To which Crosby replies:

Oh, Mr. Mercer, Mr. Mercer, Mr. Mercer, Mr. Mercer,

I believe that its foundation came from them.

When Mercer asks, "Are you positive?" Crosby continues:

Yeesss. They just slowed the tempo down

And then they really went to town.

The verse ends with this folksy exchange:

Allegretto, Mr. Crosby?

Alligators, Mr. M.

While other numbers in the show were merely in-circle fun, this duet "dazzled the audience" with its "smooth-running wit." Within a week, Crosby and Mercer made a recording, and it became one of the big hits of 1938, with *Time* magazine calling "Mr . Crosby and Mr. Mercer" the "summer's most amusing ditty." The recording rekindled Mercer's singing career, which had languished since he'd left Paul Whiteman.

(*Skylark: The Life And Times Of Johnny Mercer,* pages104-106)

As Pete Cakanic has already said, this book is well worth reading.

2. In the Beauty of Lilies

by John Updike, published in 1996, ISBN 0140255885

Let me set the scene by quoting from member Frank Startup's letter.

Thank you for the excellent Summer edition of BING: engrossing as always. I was particularly interested by Ted Laker's piece on mentions of Bing Crosby in books, and wondered if you knew of the growing significance of Crosby in the work of John Updike. In his book of memoirs 'Self-Consciousness' written in 1989, Updike makes him a symbol of the transience of youth and the way in which what seems solid and eternal proves after all to be ephemeral. In the famous 'Rabbit' tetralogy, Updike's everyman Harry 'Rabbit' Angstrom is, of course, a Sinatra man, categorising Crosby as 'sly Irish', but in his novel 'In the Beauty of the Lilies', Updike creates a scene in which one of his characters, Alma, a film star of the fifties, stars with Bing in a re-make of Cagney's 'Strawberry Blonde'. If you're aware of this, I'm sorry to waste your time, but if not, I think you and all of us who admire Crosby would be interested, so I've typed up the relevant extracts and enclose them.

Updike is, of course, a major modem-novelist, one of the three or four greatest living American writers, so it's good to think that this projection of Bing Crosby will be studied in literature courses on English and American campuses for a long time to come.

Well, I knew practically nothing about John Updike's work but I was fascinated to read the extracts provided by Frank.

Music excites us to visions, and vanishes like a generation's bodily secretions. When I watch, say, televised film clips of Bing Crosby, or catch a honeyed bit of Doris Day on a Golden Oldies band, I realise how these singers are taking my life with them, into silence and then grave. And how remarkably young they were, at the time when they appeared ageless giants and set my nerves to tingling from thousands of

miles away, from that Los Angeles or New York that exists only in the airwaves and in the mind of the receiver. Stars are young, it turns out otherwise they would not be smooth enough and quick enough for the intolerant, impatient camera. Most of us, indeed, except politicians, are young when we make our mark. And then we live and live, with our canes and blood tests and toilet seats fattened like orthopedic shoes.

(from the autobiographical *Self-Consciousness*)

She did get her wish to make a musical comedy - a Warner remake of 'The Strawberry Blonde', resplendent in Vistarama, co-starring Bing Crosby, with Dick Van Dyke in the Jack Carson role and Janet Leigh as Olivia De Havilland. Crosby did not let the nearly thirty years' difference between himself and his leading lady show on screen: he had recently married the even younger Kathryn Grant, who had been with Essie in the making of 'The Last Time We Saw Topeka', and who now visited the Warner lot in a majestic state of pregnancy. The child, Harry Lillis Crosby Jr., was born a month after the film wrapped. The film couple - Alma in a henna-rinsed pompadour, and the senior Harry Lillis Crosby in a toupee that had its own red tinge - weightlessly waltzed from one side of the curved screen to the other, and entwined voices for a gentle duet that amazed the musical insiders by going platinum. "And they wanted me dubbed," said Alma at the 1959 Grammy awards, as the audience roared with laughter. The Hollywood crowd had softened towards her, as she had grown from a challenging, wilful ingenue to a seasoned, adaptable screen veteran.

She has become a comedienne by letting herself be infected with Crosby's marvellous lazy lightness, in banter that felt ad-libbed even when carefully rehearsed. Unlike her other leading men, Crosby owed little of his success to physical handsomeness. He had conquered the worlds of radio, recording and film with sheer performance; as a boy in Spokane, he excelled at any sport he took up, and was so clever at school the Jesuits had hoped to make a trial lawyer of him. The ageing crooner's occasional flashes of impatience and coldness did not alienate her. A certain inhuman efficiency had to lie at the heart of such achievements. She observed in him what she already sensed in herself, the danger of becoming a performer purely, of coming alive in proportion to the size of the audience, and being absent-minded and remote when the audience was small. She knew enough Irishmen - Patrick, for one, and the bachelor algebra teacher back in Basingstoke, Mr. O'Brien, and Spencer Tracy and Donald O'Connor, and indeed until the emergence of the Jews hadn't the Irish been the soul of American entertainment? - to understand how an unflappable charm and wit could enwrap a pinched, rigid private morality, a spoiled priesthood.

(From *In the Beauty Of The Lilies* 1996)

Fascinating to see Bing being woven into a fictional story in this way. Mr. Updike sounds like our kind of man! Our thanks to Frank Startup for drawing our attention to Mr. Updike's work.

3. The Man Who Would Be Bing

We reviewed Ken Crossland's excellent book about Michael Holliday in an earlier issue but USA members may like to know that it can now be obtained from:

Trans-Atlantic Publications, Inc

311 Bainbridge St., Philadelphia PA 19147

(Phone: [215] 925-5083,

e-mail: order@transatlanticpub.com)

BING-ING AROUND

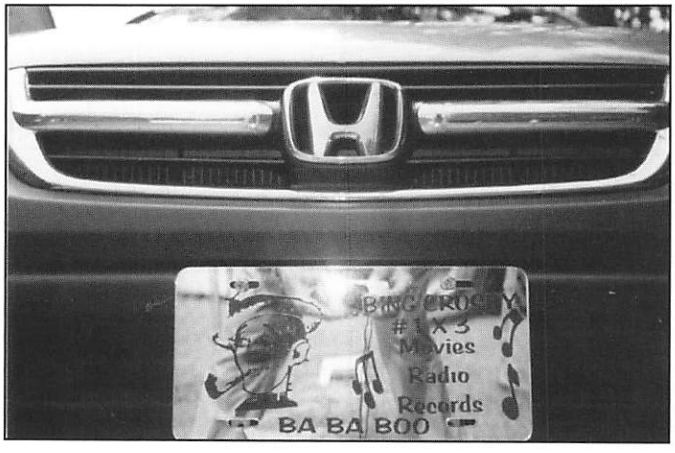
Here's Pete Cakanic with some good ideas to promote Bing.

Publicizing Bing has been discussed in BING and formerly in BINGANG and on the Bing site on the Internet. We have been advised to write to editors, radio stations, record producers, the movie studios, etc.

There are some simple ways to promote Bing, too. For example, in South Carolina and in neighboring Georgia, front license plates on vehicles are not required. I've seen many Confederate flags on the front plates as well as business logos and comic messages.

Walking through an Augusta, GA flea market, I saw a large display advertising "custom-made" plates. A large computer, copier, scanner and equipment needed for production sat in the booth's center and looked very professional. Named "A Good Sign" the ad read, "Banners, Magnetic Signs, Logos, and Lettering."

Why not make up a plate promoting Bing? Bettie, a very competent computer buff with an obvious flair for art work, told me it could be done. I brought in a quintessential Bing image, with him wearing a straw hat and leaning into a microphone.



It took some work; much of the body had to be reconfigured because color could not be reproduced on the mirrored gold finish in the background, but the lettering and Bing image in blue came out fine. It came with a license plate holder, plastic protective cover, and four gold-colored bolts. Only $20. If anyone decides to make one, I'd suggest the background be blue and the lettering and Bing likeness be gold.

The plate has often produced results. Once I pulled up to a car dealer with four mid-forties guys sitting in front. When I got out, one guy smiled and gave me a "buh-buh-boo."

It's the 21st century, and many of us have telephone answering machines. Why not have Bing greet callers? Wig Wiggins, our American rep, uses Bing's classic final recording "Once in a While." Bing's "Who Calls" is my choice. It's easy to record onto your machine via CD. The part I chose is near the finish at about 2:48 minutes. Right after "Can it be the one I love" Bing finishes with "Who calls, da ra de da ra ra ra, who calls." Then I announce "Thanks, Bing" and state my name. I've gotten a lot of chuckles out of this message.

Another little way to promote Bing is to roll down your window when you come to a stop at an intersection with a crowd of people or even just a few, and if you've got Bing on your car CD or tape, crank the volume up a bit - not to excess but just enough so the public hears "the Voice of the Century."

A few years back at a dinner in Tacoma, WA, sponsored by the former Bing Crosby Historical Society, all of the attendees were given a Bing stamp caricature. I use it on all personal correspondence, not only with Bingers but in any correspondence to a newspaper, radio station, or other media. There are business that can make a rubber stamp. It's simple and inexpensive.

BING AT WAR

There's no dispute that Bing was the Voice of World War II. He made more V-Discs and was on Armed Forces Radio more than any other entertainer. He was broadcast so much that the Germans nicknamed him "Der Bingle."

During the Korean War, the Chinese and Korean communist forces broadcast Bing singing "White Christmas." The enemy hoped to demoralize American soldiers by playing the record at battle lines over a loud P.A. system. That was supposed to make them homesick, but probably hearing Bing was comforting to most of them.

Then there was Vietnam, the first Rock 'n' Roll war. It was a war Bing was against, as he told jazz critic and columnist Nat Hentoff in an interview in 1976: "I was against the war, but I didn't know what I could do about it." He was one of a consortium of wealthy men who tried to raise ransom money for the release of POWs.

It was Bing's "White Christmas" that signaled the end of that war. It was 110 degrees in Saigon. A general ordered the playing of that song by Bing - something every American would recognize as a code for everyone to move to a secure zone for evacuation.

And now in the 21st century, producer Michael Moore in his blockbuster documentary and politically anti-Bush film "Fahrenheit 9-11" uses a newsreel scene of Special Forces on Christmas Eve in Iraq preparing for a combat mission. Bing and the Andrews Sisters are heard in the background singing "You better watch out, you better not cry, Santa Claus is coming to town." Battle scenes ensue, explosions and bombardments take place. The bloodied wounded are being carried away as we hear "He knows when you are sleeping, he knows when you're awake, so be good for goodness sake."

That makes four wars Bing was in. Maybe even World War I has a connection to Bing. His older brother Everett (the "wrong" Crosby as he was called) was a toughened field artillery sergeant who served in St.Aignan, France (See Giddins' book "Pocketful of Dreams"). He later served as Bing's manager and was the one who dealt with studio moguls and broadcasting executives. The toughness he developed in World War I, no doubt, helped him secure some great contracts for Bing.

Pete Cakanic

509 Pershing Dr., North Augusta, SC 29841-3661

Phone: 803-278-0645 E-mail: bingfan@comcast.net

THE STRANGE CASE OF "MYSTERIOUS MONTAGUE"

Bill Piccone looks at one of Bing's strangest friends.

As is well known, Bing Crosby's favorite pastime was golf, and many were his friends and cronies on the links. In his book *Call Me Lucky* and on many other occasions, Bing spoke affectionately about golf, the courses he had played all over the world, and his fellow golfers, especially Bob Hope. Possibly the most intriguing of them all was John "Mysterious" Montague, whose real name was LaVerne Moore.

LaVerne Matthew Moore was born in Syracuse, New York on August 25, 1905. His father was a "churchgoing steel mill worker." The Moores also had another son and two daughters. As he grew, LaVerne developed prodigious strength, an enormous appetite, and considerable athletic prowess, playing baseball and football and finally settling on golf, which his older brother (a pro) taught him. Moore earned the nickname "Bull," because of his athletic skill and "his unruly disposition. He could fight three men at a time, toss a waiter across the bar of a lunch counter, and lift the front wheels of an automobile with one hand." He also could drink large amounts of liquor without showing it, and "his dealings with the opposite sex were notable for old-fashioned chivalry." He was proving already to be a complex character, part ruffian and part gentleman. In 1927 a grocer accused of selling liquor complained that a young bully posing as a policeman had walked in and taken $50. Moore got a six-month suspended sentence.

Then, on the early morning of August 5, 1930, four men robbed a roadhouse near Jay, New York (about 200 miles east of Syracuse). The owner, Kim Hana, and his father-in-law were beaten, gagged and bound. The four robbers took $750 from the till and made their getaway. They ran their cars off the road, and one hit a culvert. The driver was killed and his passenger was found

nearby in a daze. He was arrested at the scene. The two men in the other car escaped but were later arrested. One served two years in jail, and the other served six years. Was the fourth man LaVerne Moore? It appears so, for in the wrecked getaway car, state troopers found a Gladstone bag containing Moore's driver's license, letters addressed to him, newspaper clippings, as well as 17 golf clubs. The following day Moore said goodbye to his mother, saying that he was leaving to seek a career in golf or baseball. It would be seven years before his family would see him again.

In the next few years the golf world began to take note of one **John Montague**, who apparently first appeared in Florida, then appears to have drifted into Mexico, then to Nevada, prospecting in gold fields with little success. Then he got a job with a construction company, earning good money. Finally in about 1933 he arrived in Hollywood, becoming a golfing crony of some of the leading names in Hollywood, including Oliver Hardy, Richard Arlen, Guy Kibbee, and Bing Crosby, at Los Angeles' Lakeside Club, of which Bing eventually became champion.

In later years, Bob Hope recalled: "Montague was an excellent golfer, relentless under pressure. We played him for a $5.00 Nassau and he'd give you any number of strokes you wanted. He usually won. One day he and Bing had played golf, and afterward they were sitting around the bar at Lakeside. Bing had lost, and he was a little petulant."

"'You don't give me enough strokes,' he told Montague, and Monty replied, 'I can handle you with a shovel, a bat, and a rake.' So they went out and played one of the most famous one-hole matches in Lakeside history. Montague took a bat on the tee and hit a lovely shot. Then he used the same weapon and hit another one, but it veered off into a trap. Bing was on the green in two, about thirty feet from the pin. Montague took his shovel and got the ball on the green. Bing hit his first putt three feet past the hole, and Monty said. "That's good, pal" and knocked Bing's ball away. With Bing watching in astonishment, Monty used the rake like a pool cue and knocked the ball right into the cup. Bing shook his head in wonderment and walked back in."

Montague had become known not only for his golfing skills but for breaking the cameras of anyone who tried to take his picture. On this occasion, however, and at least once more afterward, a photographer followed Montague on the course and photographed him with a telephoto lens, then sold the pictures to various newspapers and magazines. The state police in upstate New York were alerted to these photos and sent a set of LaVerne Moore's fingerprints to the LAPD. In short order, Montague was arrested after it was shown that the prints matched Moore's. This was in early July 1937.

A—18 *** THURSDAY LOS ANGELES EVENING HERALD AND EXPRESS: OCTOBER 28, 1937 THURSDAY

Miraculous Shoots From Trap With Wood and— Montague There It Goes— Dead to the Cup Shows How

TOP OF SWING

Miraculous John Montague, whose feats on the links are almost past belief, here demonstrates, for Herald and Express readers, his most amazing golf shot. He plays a ball which is

POWER HERE!

buried in the sand to within a few feet of the cup, giving him a put for a birdie. The most amazing part of the shot is that he plays it with a driver—where others would be happy to achieve

IMPACT

ON THE WAY

the same results with a niblic. Montague, acquitted on charges of implication in a robbery seven years ago, plans to return to California at once and he will play in major tournament golf

BALL IS CLEAR

ON THE FLAG

throughout the world. He has signed a seven-year contract which will net him $1,000,000. Copyrighted photos for Herald and Express by Frank Bentley.

PUTT FOR BIRD

After nearly seven years of searching, the state police had their man. Montague was quoted: "I got into a jam when I was a wild young kid. I'm glad it's over. I had intended going east and clearing this thing up anyway."

His Hollywood friends, including Bing Crosby, flocked to his aid, with Bing saying that they were "all back of him 100 percent. If, as he said, his trouble is the result of some prank or mistake when he was a kid, I think he's entitled to some consideration. He's a grand fellow, always a gentleman, a great guy on the golf links, and the kind of a chap you just naturally enjoy being with."

Montague was taken by train to Elizabethtown, New York, arriving on August 24th to stand trial for his role in the robbery of Kim Hana's roadhouse. Bing said in an affidavit that Montague was "law-abiding, well-respected, useful, and an upright citizen." Montague was soon released on $25,000 bail posted by Bing. He then went to visit his parents at their new home in Syracuse.

The trial itself began on October 19, 1937. Roadhouse owner Hana, his wife and three daughters testified, as did Hana's father-in-law, Matt Cobb, who was deaf because of the beating he had received in the robbery. Hana said, "I think it's him . . . He looks the same across the eyes, but too fat for the lad who was in the roadhouse." Several state troopers testified. One recalled stopping a green car near Schroon Lake, a few miles from the roadhouse, with Moore and Roger Norton as passengers and that Moore "talked his way out." Roger Norton, now a truck driver in Cleveland, testified

that Moore beat Matt Cobb with a blackjack. The prosecution rested its case on the 22nd. October. Montague's defense began its case on the 25th, with his mother and two sisters testifying that he was asleep in their home in Syracuse on the night of the robbery.

Montague himself testified that he had fled Syracuse and changed his name because he remembered leaving his luggage in one of the getaway cars. He denied any involvement with the robbery. Then a friend, Francis McLaughlin of Washington, D.C. testified that he picked him up at a golf-driving range a few hours before the robbery occurred and drove him home. Then William Carleton, one of the robbers, denied that Moore/Montague was involved and that the fourth man was a stranger named Burns.

Montague's Hollywood friends had sent depositions testifying to his character. Among them was one from Bing. Referring to their friendship over five years, Bing said, "I have never known him to behave other than as a gentleman. The circle that I moved in accepted him as an upright man."

The defense rested its case on the 26th. The jury, after nearly five hours, reached a verdict of "not guilty." The spectators in court erupted in cheers, though Judge Harry E. Owen said to the jury that he disagreed with their verdict.

Soon after, Montague played a charity golf match with Babe Ruth, Babe Didrikson, and Mrs. Sylvia Annenberg, attracting a huge crowd. Then he returned to Hollywood.

Before Montague was taken back to New York for his trial, Everett Crosby had signed him to a contract "for a program as a film actor, radio entertainer, and professional golfer . . . calling for $1,000,000 over a period of seven years. . ."

Bing himself had said after Montague's acquittal: "I don't know what Monty's plans are, but he ought to make a lot of money. I suppose he'll go into pictures . . . I imagine he'll play roles such as George Bancroft plays." Larry Crosby later said, "He's going to make a couple of shorts, showing how he plays golf, but they won't bring in more than $20,000."

Man Plays Better-than-Scratch Golf Using Shovel, Garden Rake, and Baseball Bat

IN THE SIXTIES EVERY ROUND

Makes Bobby Jones Look Like A Rabbit

From C. V. R. THOMPSON,
Sunday Express Special Correspondent
NEW YORK, Saturday.

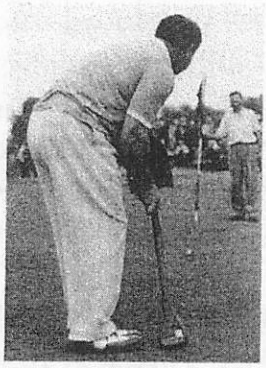
THIS is the true story of the greatest golfer in the world. He is an unknown player who

Can drive fifty yards further than Bobby Jones;

Can put an approach shot within ten feet of the hole from any distance up to 200 yards;

Defeated a good golfer easily using a shovel, a garden rake, and a baseball bat;

Broke a course record on four days running.



Experts who have seen him play have no hesitation in pronouncing **John Montague, of California,** the greatest golfer in the world.

Montague is a mystery man. He refuses to be photographed or to play in public, to say where he came from, how he makes a living, what is his real name.

There is only one man who knows his history—pudgy comedian Oliver Hardy—and he is pledged to preserve the miracle golfer's secret.

USED RAKE

Legends sprang up in Hollywood about Montague, but no one believed them.

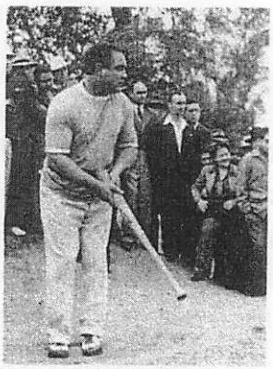
It was said that when Montague bet his friend Bing Crosby—an excellent golfer—that he could beat him with a garden rake, a shovel and a baseball bat, the match ended after one hole because Montague began with a birdie. He used the rake as putter.

It was said he hardly ever played above sixties, and that his best score was sixty-one at Palm Springs desert course, where he lowered the record four days running.

It was said he could curve a golf ball around an oak tree to reach the green, that he could do all the things that golfers had dreamed of.

Those legends are true. Montague has come out of his shell a bit during his present visit to Hollywood.

He still refuses to play in tournaments, even for his friends, but some experts have seen Montague, and they say everything that has been said about his golf is true.



They have seen him do his curving-round-an-oak-tree act. They have seen him play chip shots into a cup over a moving obstacle like a dog.

Douglas MacKinnon, a film writer, lost a £1 bet over that.

They have seen him land the ball in a circle four feet diameter drawn in mud at the side of a water hazard from a distance of twenty-five yards, although he couldn't see the target. Another player lost a £100 bet because he did that.

Bing offered Montague a small part in his upcoming film *Doctor Rhythm,* saying, "I knew he'd win out. He comes back here with clean hands and can start over again. . . .and I'll back him against anybody in this world when it comes to playing golf. . . Monty's personal charm will make him successful in motion pictures." The Hays Office apparently didn't see it Bing's way.

As it turned out, Montague never was to appear in films or on radio, but he was free to pursue his primary interest - golf, finally playing in tournaments, but making little real news from 1938 on, possibly because "he is better fitted for an easy-going country club life, in which he can impress a small circle of friends with his special talent for trick shots, than for tournament play."

It is not known whether Bing and "Monty" remained friends. Bing does not mention him in the golfing section of his book, *Call Me Lucky.*

John Montague died at the age of 66 on May 26, 1972 at a motel in suburban Studio City, California. His death notice appeared in major newspapers, recounting his golfing prowess and his trial for first-degree robbery, which left a shadow on him for the rest of his life.

So was he innocent or guilty? The evidence linking to the robbery appears compelling, and his behavior in Hollywood prior to his arrest appears consistent with that of someone on the run from the law.

If Laverne Moore/John Montague had decided to be a good citizen early on and apply himself to golf, he might have become to that sport what Babe Ruth was to baseball - or Bing Crosby to popular song. It may be an old cliché, but the story of "Mysterious Montague"

appears to be living proof that CRIME DOES NOT PAY.

Bill Piccone

Note: References used by the author include: *Time Magazine,* July 19, 1937; *Confessions of a Hooker,* by Bob Hope; *New York Times,* July 12 & 19, Aug. 25, Oct. 21, 24. 27 & 28,1937 and May 30, 1972; *New York Herald Tribune,* Oct. 28, 1937; *Hollywood Citizen-News,* Oct. 28, 1937; *BING,* Summer 2001; and *Bing Crosby: A Pocketful of Dreams,* by Gary Giddins. Direct quotes from these sources have been placed in quotation marks.

(Editor: It was surprising that Bing did not mention Montague in *Call Me Lucky* but he did discuss him in some depth when interviewed by Norman Blackburn for the publication *Lakeside Golf Club of Hollywood, 50th Anniversary Book* published in 1974. Bing recalled the famous match with the rake, bat and shovel and went on to say:

> "I tell you what he could do. He could take his crazy putter, the one that had the shaft down in the middle of the head, and he'd bet you he could hit a ball 200 yards with the putter. He'd throw it up in the air, like a guy batting flies to the outfield, and hit right at the junction of the shaft and the head of the putter. He'd catch it right there with top spin and that thing would take off 200 yards every time. He had great coordination, great reflexes and tremendous strength. He was very jovial. I never knew him to cause any trouble, except guys would get drunk around there and pick on him, like Oakie. He'd laugh it off as long as he could and finally he'd stuff them in a locker or something."

The book contains similar reminiscences by Johnny Weissmuller and clearly Montague was quite a man. After his acquittal he was featured in newspapers playing golf shots and we have reproduced one example from the Los Angeles Evening Herald and Express. *Look* magazine in their issue of December 7, 1937 looked at Montague's golf too. He also made a short film called *Golf Magic* with Jack Redman in which they both exhibited their trick shots and which can be purchased on video if you have $50 spare.

Our thanks to Bill Piccone for researching and writing the article.)

Del Mar tips its cap to a dignified visitor

The *San Diego Union-Tribune* of July 25 carried an article by Ed Graney about an important visit by our Honorary President which we have great pleasure in sharing with our readers.

There is something about the elegance of a lady. Something so exhilarating, so distinctive. It's in her attitude, in the way she recalls another time. It's in her language. Her pronunciation. Her wit. Her voice.

This is the sensation you get from Kathryn Crosby. Grace emanates through a telephone line. The intelligent thing is to not talk much at all. A few minutes into our conversation, I realize any lengthy response on my part will only delay hearing more of her colorful memories and assuredly offer an inferior perspective. So I just listen. And learn.

She will walk the grounds at Del Mar racetrack today for the first time, in town to present a trophy at the Bing Crosby Handicap, at the annual six-furlong sprint that was first run in 1946. Bing Crosby would have turned 100 this past May and having Kathryn attend the race is a way track officials can celebrate the centennial moment. It's a classy gesture.

How interesting. The second wife of Del Mar's co-founder has never stepped foot in the place that brought so much pleasure to her late husband. But the couple wed in 1957 and by then Bing was spending more and more time with his golf tournament in Pebble Beach.

"His mother went to the races every year and would ask if I wanted to go," says Kathryn, 70. "I always said no. I just wasn't that close to horses. They always ran away from me. And Bing liked to wager a little on them. Now, I'm a Texas Baptist, so I wasn't too fond of that. It's OK to win, but I hate losing. He loved the races. He loved the horses. He loved the jockeys. He loved the trainers. He loved watching a horse achieve its potential. The track was where he could be with friends. It was such a cozy place for him."

It was in 1953 when she strolled across the lot at Paramount Studios, a young screen and stage actress from Houston who literally met executives on a Monday, screen-tested with Bill Holden on Wednesday and signed a seven-year contract on Friday. And on a particular afternoon, a tennis racket in one hand and a petticoat dangling from a hanger in the other, she happened by a dressing room near the drama building.

And she heard that voice.

"He said, 'Howdy, Tex, what's your hurry?'" remembers Kathryn. "And I just froze on the spot. Obviously, I was a fan growing up, but we could never afford his records. I turned around and saw those blue eyes. You can't move from the glare. You just stand there. It was amazing. The tennis racket dropped and hit my knee and the petticoat fell off its hanger. I was sure he thought I was an absolute nut. He stood there, looking so cool. He said, 'You look a little flustered. Why not come in and have a cup of tea?' And from that moment on, that was it."

At the time, she also wrote a weekly entertainment column for a newspaper back home - "Come on now, $5 a column, that was big money back then," says Kathryn - and over the next several years interviewed Crosby on the set of *White Christmas* and *The Country Girl.* Then came the marriage and three children. Bing Crosby passed away in 1977. Soon, Kathryn will help welcome their ninth grandchild.

Today, she spends much time in the same ranch home they shared in the Burlingame-Hillsboro section of the Bay Area, the same ranch home that has dwindled from 50 to five acres over the years as land was sold and developed, the same ranch home once owned by a man named Charles S. Howard. You might have heard of his famous knobby-kneed horse. Name: Seabiscuit.

Kathryn was a just a child in August of 1938, when the famed Seabiscuit-Ligaroti match race was staged at Del Mar, the day many say put the track on the international racing map. But she heard countless tales about it from Bing, who was part owner of the South American champion Ligaroti with Howard's son, Lin.

"All the stories about the jockeys whipping at each other instead of the horses, about the close finish," says Kathryn. "It seemed to have such a theatrical feel to it. It was a time that caught the imagination of so many people in our country and made even more famous through the book and movie.

"Bing loved Del Mar so much. I had no idea he had helped build it when we met. I hadn't a clue. I think that amused him. The racetrack looks so beautiful in all the pictures I have seen."

Today, those snapshots become reality for her. And the velvety sound of "When the turf meets the surf, down at old Del Mar" will have special meaning to one graceful visitor.

Ed Graney

(Editor: Our grateful thanks to Ed Graney and the San Diego Union-Tribune.

In the UK, Kathryn was featured in an article in 'My Weekly' magazine [August 14 edition] which was written by our member Peter Thipthorp. Peter interviewed Kathryn at Hofstra and his nice article is titled 'My Life With a Legend'. Again, some useful publicity for Bing and Kathryn.)

Celluloid Crosby

If you wanted to read about Elvis Presley you wouldn't think of picking up a copy of BING magazine, would you? And yet there were four Presley references in the last issue of the magazine. Both entertainers have something in common. Bing invented popular music in the last century and Elvis re-invented it just as Bing's star was beginning to shine less brightly. Both capitalised on their recording successes by making films. Both died within a couple of months of each other.

In BING 137 Greg Van Beek reveals that Bing was asked to make comment on the death of Elvis shortly after Presley's passing was made known. I wouldn't have thought that Bing was an obvious choice although both were American superstars. That is as opposed to being mere stars. A superstar's reign extends beyond the average seven years of fame that just about everyone in the entertainment arena enjoys. Bing and Elvis were at the forefront of the music industry for most of their professional lives.

A few magazine pages further along our editor shows how RCA made the most of Presley's record sales by applying for sales certification to the Record Industry Association of America. If only the owners of Bing's American Decca masters had appreciated the publicity value of such action, there would be more than 22 gold records in the Crosby catalogue. The issue has been debated before. An item in *The Miami News* dated 1st December, 1970 was headed, "Who's the champ? Elvis or Bing". Back then Decca were just as wary of publicity. It was left to Larry Crosby to wave the flag when Decca struck a platinum record to commemorate Bing's sale of "more than 300,650,000 records". And doesn't that rather precise figure indicate that the supporting statistics were in place to document what specific sales were achieved by individual Crosby releases in the 20 plus years he was signed to the company? Larry said: "We've got the royalty reports here if anybody wants to look at them". RCA contended that Elvis was the all-time worldwide champion with 275,000,000 albums and singles marketed in the previous fifteen years. That seemed something of a ball park figure. Although *Billboard* magazine is regarded as keeping best selling record charts they were not able to arbitrate because they had "no hard data on the top four or five record selling vocalist of all time."

The letters pages of the last BING magazine then printed news from Lorne Harasen of Canada about how the "Larry King Live - Bing Crosby Remembered" show put Mary Frances on the spot by asking her why Bing's legend hadn't carried like Sinatra's and Presley's.

Finally, Ted Laker, trawling through his well stocked library of volumes on the entertainment scene, quotes from "The Sunday Times 100 Makers of the Cinema". The Bing entry in that work closes with the comment, "Crosby, with Sinatra and Presley, was one of the three great male vocalists of the 20th century".

Those were the three male superstars of the 20th century who remained at the top for most of their careers in films and recordings. Bing had the longest superstar career. At the time of his death he was still capable of giving his best and receiving the recognition he deserved. Sinatra was a star who moved into the superstar bracket in the 1950s. His vocal qualities dipped notably in later life but he can claim superstar status because his loyal followers failed to acknowledge he had passed his vocal sell-by date and continued to attend sell out concerts and buy his last recordings in sufficient quantity to make them million sellers. The same can be said of Presley. Vocally he'd lost the power and drive associated with his overnight success in the 1950s but he

was still a superstar when he died a couple of months before Bing.

There is no problem linking Crosby with Sinatra in any article associated with films. But Bing and Elvis don't seem to belong in the same sentence. Even seeking comment from Bing on the death of Elvis somehow seemed inappropriate. Of course, had Sinatra been approached for a few words the "off the top of the head response" would not have been broadcastable, even though the two worked together on a 1960 Timex television show. As far as I know there is nothing documented about Bing and Elvis meeting. The best my researches could uncover was a catalogue published in 1999 which accompanied the auction of the archives of Graceland. In fact, the auction was misleading in that it gave the impression that Elvis artefacts were for sale. The catalogue's content soon indicated otherwise.

Graceland was the Presley residence in Memphis and the auction contained four letters linking Bing to Elvis. The first was from Colonel Tom Parker to Bing and the other three were from Bing to Parker. Almost everything in the auction seemed to have been in Parker's possession. The catalogue listed over 800 items of ephemera which must have laid at the bottom of Colonel Tom Parker's wardrobe until someone decided to have a good clear out. Parker was Presley's manager and it would appear he never threw away anything from a spent match to a railway timetable. The Bing/Parker correspondence seems to be aimed at bringing a little respectability to the recordings of Elvis. What makes contents of the auction remarkable is the estimated value of each lot. For example, four scraps of paper detailing the wardrobe measurements of Elvis and his two accompanists from June, 1956 carried an estimate of $3,500 to $5,000.

These are the Crosby related items. Remember, the price guide figures are now out of date so the current owners could be asking even more for their acquisitions. Or maybe the following five pieces of paper remain unsold.

i) Carbon copy of a letter from Parker to Bing Crosby dated December 15th, 1956. It referred to three enclosures: Elvis' Christmas album, a box of lipsticks for Kathryn as a wedding present (sic) and membership of Parker's "Snowmen's League of America Ltd". The latter item gives some indication of Parker's showmanship. The Snowmen's League was an organisation dreamed up by Parker. It was free to join. If you wanted out you had to pay a fee. By the way, what was the cost of lipstick in 1956? Parker was not known for his generosity.

ii) Two paged letter from Bing to Parker dated 13th May, 1957. Described as a wonderfully sardonic letter, Bing praises Elvis and warns the Colonel about over exposure. He then writes:

"If what you say is true, that you are able to get all the money you need out of Hope, you indeed have a tremendous talent. I've never been able to get the right time off of him if he had wrist watches up to the elbow on both arms...The only alarming factor you mention is that Hope proposes to get what he's going to give you out of me. I've had a very bad season - what with storms, typhoons, tornadoes, fires, inclement weather and picking up the rain checks...If you could let us have Elvis for a couple of weeks, I think we could get out of hock.

Enclosed is the picture you asked for, Tom. I hope it is of some value to you in elevating your prestige around M-G-M, but I doubt it very much. They're pretty snobbish over at that lot and prone to look down their noses somewhat at mere crooners - witness what happened to Sinatra, Vic Damone and myself. I hope Elvis is able in some way to put our profession on a higher plateau."

The estimated price of $500 to $600 includes the autograph photograph referred to in the letter. The reference to Vic Damone is understandable as he never managed to develop a film career whilst at M-G-M (or anywhere else for that matter), whereas Crosby and Sinatra enjoyed a massive hit some months earlier with *High Society.*

iii) Letter from Bing to Parker dated 16th December, 1959. This one had a reserve of $250 to $350 and reads in part: "Just got back from an extended vacation and hunting trip up in the Northwest to find the beautiful smoked sausage awaiting me...something that happens to be one of my very favorites."

iv) Letter from Bing to Parker dated 19th June, 1965. Parker had presumably sent Bing a copy of Elvis' September, 1957 recording of "White Christmas". Bing replied, "Sounds quite beautiful, and I'm sure is a possible hit." The letter also discussed Gary, Cremo cigars, and fishing in Mexico. The auction lot price range of $600 to $700 included sheet music of "White Christmas" and 45 singles of recordings of the song by both Bing and Elvis. In addition there is a signed photograph of Bing containing the message "To my good friend Col. Tom - wishing you success and happiness. Bing Crosby." There is a puzzle here. The Presley recording was eight years old. Had Bing only just been sent a copy for comment? And the 45 single of Presley's recording included in the auction package with the letter must have been a private pressing. No Presley discography lists a single release of the song since its recording and inclusion on Presley Christmas albums.

I very much doubt that Bing had any communication with Elvis himself. Based on the four letters up for auction, it seems that Presley's manager was anxious to establish some sort of friendship with Bing. It is significant that Bing was not the initiator of any correspondence with the Colonel. He responds to letters from Parker simply because that was his way. Bing took time out to write to anyone who sent him a letter. I think Parker saw Bing as the face of showbusiness longevity and respectability. It provided Parker with some evidence that he was in touch with the wider world of showbusiness and on that basis he kept Bing's correspondence right up until the day he died.

Keith Parkinson

THE A-Z OF BING'S MOVIES

PERLBERG, WILLIAM (1900-1968) Producer. Together with George Seaton, Perlberg was responsible for gaining recognition of Bing as a serious actor. He had been sole producer of the 1950 one reeler *You Can Change the World*, and although that had been a rather intense propaganda piece it placed Bing outside his familiar role of lightweight entertainer. What followed in 1953 was *Little Boy Lost*, with *The Country Girl* coming along the following year. Perlberg made sure that both contained a handful of songs by Crosby. They did set the scene for Bing tackling future non-vocals roles such as *Man on Fire* (1957) and *Stagecoach* (1966). Perlberg served his Hollywood apprenticeship as a talent agent and one of his early successes was to obtain a booking for the Rhythm Boys at the Montmartre Club in 1929. He went on to become a personal assistant to Columbia Studio head Harry Cohn. His first brush with film for the thinking man was his production of *Golden Boy* in 1939. For the next three decades he was behind many commercially successful films which did not insult the intelligence of the moviegoer. He died after co-producing the film adaptation of the musical *Half a Sixpence.*

(from left) Perlberg, George Seaton and John F. Warren watch the stars of 'The Country Girl' in action.

PERSONALITY Song. A curio as far as the Crosby filmography is concerned. It was in two *Road* pictures, *Utopia* (1946) and *Hong Kong* (1962). On both occasions it was sung by Dorothy Lamour, even though it suited the Crosby style. That was to be expected because its writers were Burke and Van Heusen. Bing must have thought he could do it justice because he recorded it for Decca, albeit two years after his main recording sessions for songs from *Road to Utopia.* It was on one of those July, 1944 studio dates that he also recorded *Would You*, the other Lamour solo from *Road to Utopia.*

PESSIMISTIC CHARACTER Song. The Johnny Burke-James Monaco cute song from *If I Had My Way* (1940). It is a perfectly placed ditty in that film. The character of Gustav Ericson, played by Emory Parnall, is bemoaning how badly his restaurant is performing. That's when Bing sings "Pessimistic Character". At the film's end it seems that the restaurant is back on its feet. All down to Bing's vocal, no doubt.

PHILADELPHIA STORY, THE Film on which *High Society* (1956) was based. Philip Barry wrote it for a Broadway production and Donald Ogden Stuart adapted it for the 1940 M-G-M film.

PLAY BALL Song. An Arthur Johnston-Sam Coslow composition for *College Humor* (1933) that Bing never committed to wax. It was the film's opening number. Bing, in his character of Professor Danvers, accompanied himself on the piano for this inconsequential ditty.

PLEASE Film. Made by Metropolitan Pictures and distributed by Paramount, this was almost a throwback to Bing's Sennett short days of two years earlier. It was released at the end of 1933 and was shot back to back with *Just an Echo*. In both, Bing was supported by the attractive Mary Kornman and the forbidding Vernon Dent.

PLEASE Song that can be considered as one of Bing's signature tunes. In fact, when Bing had a fifteen minute series called "Bing Sings" on Radio Luxembourg in the early 1950s "Please" introduced the show. It was written by Ralph Rainger and Leo Robin and saw service in four Crosby films. Its debut was in *The Big Broadcast* (1932). One year later it was featured by Bing in a short film of the same name. Also in 1933 it formed part of a Crosby medley in *College Humor.* It was finally heard - but not seen - in *Duffy's Tavern* (1945) via a record player. Bing updated his original 1932 Brunswick recording of "Please" for Decca in each of the following two decades.

POP GOES THE WEASEL Nursery rhyme. It was Anthony Newley who made it a pop song around 1960 but Bing beat him to the melody some thirty years earlier when he sang *PGTW* as a parody generally referred to as "We're on our Way to Bensonhurst". This was a duet with Dick Stewart for the Mack Sennett 1931 short *Billboard Girl.* It featured in an early sequence when the pair travel to college by car.

PORTER, COLE (1891-1964) The twentieth century's most sophisticated composer of popular songs. Like Irving Berlin, he wrote both words and music. Whereas Berlin and Bing seemed perfect partners in lyric and melody, so Sinatra can be regarded as the definitive Porter interpreter. That said, Bing sang Porter compositions in four movies. The films and their songs are:

Anything Goes (1936): You're the Top; There'll Always be a Lady Fair
Swingtime with the Stars (1944 short): Don't Fence Me In
Anything Goes (1956): You're the Top; All Through the Night; Blow, Gabriel, Blow
High Society (1956): Little One; True Love; I Love You Samantha: Now You Has Jazz; Well, Did You Evah!

Porter wrote primarily for Broadway musicals (there were 23 of them). Some were adapted for the screen although he also wrote directly to order for Hollywood studios. "Easy to Love" was written for *Born to Dance* (1936), for instance. His fictional film biography (not such a contradiction in terms if you have seen it) was *Night and Day* (1946). It included Porter songs from several sources. So too did *At Long Last Love,* made eleven years after Porter's death and notable only for the fact that his songs were performed by non-singers such as Burt Reynolds and Cybill Shepherd. Porter even wrote for television, with "Aladdin" being broadcast in 1958. Porter's private life was far from conventional. A visit to the local library should reveal several biographies detailing his troubled life.

PRINCESS AND THE PIRATE, THE Film. This 1944 Bob Hope starrer featured Bing in its closing minutes. It was a typical gag appearance which allowed the two to swap insults. Hope referred to Bing as "a bit player from Paramount". Crosby, preoccupied in embracing Virginia Mayo, dismissed Hope with the line "go sell your rack shellac", a reference to Hope's half hour radio show sponsored by Pepsodent.

PRINZ, LEROY (1895-1983) Dance director. Was Bing capable of being directed in his limited forays into dancing on screen? The Crosby dancing style would be recognisable if seen in silhouette but I've always assumed it was always designed by Bing to suit his own limitations. The Crosby dance steps also exhibited few variations. Yet he had LeRoy Prinz as dance director in a quartet of films. Discounting *Too Much Harmony* (1933), when Prinz was the choreographer for the dance ensemble, and *The Big Broadcast of 1936* (1935), where Bing was shoehorned in to sing a song, Prinz is named on the credits of *Waikiki Wedding* (1937), *Double Or Nothing (1937), Paris Honeymoon* (1939) and *Roads to Singapore* (1940) and *Zanzibar* (1941). Before entering the film industry Prinz had a career which, in itself, would form the plot basis for at least a modest TV movie. He was a member of the Foreign Legion. He then became an aviator and entered showbusiness as a choreographer at the Folies Bergere. In films from 1932 until 1958, I would say his most striking contributions were made to *Yankee Doodle Dandy* (1942) and *South Pacific* (1958), his last film.

PUGLIA, FRANK (1892-1975) Actor. Puglia played a bent lawyer in *Road to Rio.* It was a typical role. For over forty years the Sicilian born actor played villainous characters of foreign origin. He was one such in *Casablanca* (1943) and he hadn't reformed by the time he made his last big screen appearance in the Dean Martin starrer *Mr. Ricco* (1975).

Frank Puglia tries to tempt the boys in 'Rio'.

PUT IT THERE PAL Song. This Johnny Burke-James Van Heusen composition for the 1946 release *Road to Utopia* had a life that extended well beyond that film. It was written as a Hope-Crosby duet and was introduced by the duo in a scene where they are on a sledge, embarking on a search for gold. Thereafter, they reprised the song at least once on radio and several times on television, quite often modifying the lyrics but always building in mild insults.

QUINN, ANTHONY (1915-2001) Actor. He appeared in small parts in three Crosby films. The type of role he portrayed can be readily identified by his characters' names. He was Kimo in *Waikiki Wedding* (1937), Caesar in *Road to Singapore* (1940) and Sheikh Mullay Kasim in *Road to Morocco* (1942). By then he was ready to embark on his

own road to stardom. Ten years later his performances in starring roles in *Viva Zapata!* (1952), *Attila* (1954), *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1956) and *Zorba the Greek* (1964) demonstrated the confidence Hollywood and Cinecitta had in his drawing power. He married the adopted daughter of Cecil B. DeMille in 1936 but the fact that he was still playing minor roles in Bing pictures some six years later provides a convincing argument that his father-in-law did nothing to advance his career. He made over one hundred films and if I saw his name above the title I was usually sure that it was not my kind of film. He played every part in a larger than life acting style. Even his private existence was revealed to be larger than life if his autobiography *The Original Sin* is anything to go by.

RAINGER, RALPH (1901-1942) Composer who collaborated with lyricist Sam Coslow and Leo Robin with one or two exceptions. The most notable exception was "I Wished on the Moon", when Dorothy Parker provided the words to his tune. Bing sang the song in *The Big Broadcast of 1936* (1935) and everyone who has eavesdropped on the Decca recording session of that number knows exactly how Bing felt about singing it. At least Bing atoned for his treatment of the song by rerecording it for his musical biography in 1954. The Rainger film song relationship with Bing began with the original *Big Broadcast* in 1932. Rainger's collaborator on the two Crosby vocals ("Here Lies Love" and "Please") was Leo Robin who continued to partner Rainger on almost all of Bing's Hollywood songs. "Please" was used again for the 1933 short of the same name, *College Humor*, also made in 1933, and *Duffy's Tavern* (1944). The collaboration continued with another of their songs being placed in *She Loves Me Not* (1934). That was "Love in Bloom", which Bing duetted with Kitty Carlisle. Paramount used Robin and Rainger later in 1934 for a couple of what were to become Crosby evergreens following their performance in *Here is My Heart*: "June in January" and "With Every Breath I Take", the latter receiving a Crosby vocal the following year in the short *Star Night at the Cocoanut Grove*. The Robin-Rainger-Crosby relationship was strongly in evidence in *Waikiki Wedding* (1937) with "Blue Hawaii" and "Sweet is the Word for You". Rainger also wrote a pseudo Hawaiian ditty together with Jimmy Lowell called "Nani Ona Pua" which Bing sang in the film but which did not merit a studio recording. 1938 saw the final songwriting assignments for a Crosby film being allocated to Robin and Rainger by Paramount. The film was *Paris Honeymoon* and the songs were "I Have Eyes", "You're a Sweet Little Headache", "The Funny Old Hills" and "Joobalai". Before his death, Rainger had one last shared copyright with Robin. That was for the War Activities Committee and resulted in "Buy, Buy Bonds" which Bing went on to sing in the War Bond Drive short *All Star Bond Rally*, shown in 1945. As well as Rainger's strong Crosby connection there is the Bob Hope link. That was "Thanks for the Memory", the signature tune that was struck up seconds before Hope made any personal, radio or television appearance.

RAPHAELSON, SAMSON (1896-1983) Playwright. He wrote "Accent on Youth" and Paramount acquired the film rights outright. They used it in 1935 and released it under its original title. Fifteen years later they dusted it off and had Arthur Sheekman fashion a screenplay for *Mr. Music*. Then, in 1959, they squeezed the last cent out of their investment by assigning John Michael Hayes to write a screenplay for *But Not For Me* (1959) which involved Clark Gable playing the character Bing took on in *Mr. Music*.

RASUMNY, MIKHAIL (1890-1956) Actor. As Ahmed Fey in *Road To Morocco* (1942) Rasumny provided the appropriate degree of menace that resulted in his casting in the first place. He was one of the pool of character actors that Paramount called upon whenever they wanted a "foreign type". He was still on the studio books four years after *Morocco* when he was seen in uncredited parts in *Blue Skies* as Francois and in *Variety Girl* (1947) as himself. Rasumny was a cantor's son from Odessa who arrived in the U.S.A. as a member of the Moscow Art Theatre in 1935. Five years later he made his Hollywood debut in *Comrade X*. He played character parts in numerous films, always as someone with an accent to indicate he was "not from these parts" until his final appearance in *Hot Blood* (1956).

Keith Parkinson

Bing on the soundtrack

We were delighted to read that there are a couple of Bing tracks in the new animated film *The Polar Express* - namely "White Christmas" and "Here Comes Santa Claus." Amazon are offering the soundtrack album and here is their description of it:

> "Promising to be this holiday season's family film blockbuster, the revolutionary computer-animated *The Polar Express* - based on a best-selling children's book, starring the voice of Tom Hanks and directed by Academy Award winner Robert Zemeckis - is a classic Christmas film with a modern look. The soundtrack album also mixes the classic with the contemporary, with immortal versions of the greatest Christmas songs ever penned, such as "White Christmas" from Bing Crosby and new recordings from Josh Groban "Believe", Aerosmith's Steven Tyler "Rockin' On Top Of The World" and others. This Christmas everyone will be getting on board *The Polar Express*."

Barbara Walters' ABC-TV interview with Bing, May 1977

While Bing was convalescing from his fall from the stage at Pasadena, he gave an in-depth interview to Barbara Walters and this has been the subject of some debate on the Bing Crosby Internet Museum bulletin board in recent months. Here's the most contentious part of the interview.

WALTERS: Suppose one of your sons came home and said, "Dad, I've got this girl and do you mind if we share a room here in the house?"

BING: In OUR house? No chance!

WALTERS: It happens in other families.

BING: Well, it wouldn't happen in MY family. If any one of them did that I wouldn't speak to them ever again.

WALTERS: Ever again?

BING: Ever again!

WALTERS: Do you mean that if one of your sons came home and said "I like this girl and I'm living with her and we're not married" you would never speak to him again?

BING: Aloha on the steel guitar.

WALTERS: That's awfully stern.

BING: Well, I was raised a Catholic. We believe in marriage.

WALTERS: And you'd rather he be married than maybe spend some time and found out what she was like?

BING: He doesn't have to take her to bed to find out what kind of woman he's marrying.

WALTERS: What would you do if Mary Frances, who is now 17, came to you at 19 or 20 and said "Dad, I'm having an affair. There's somebody I care about." ?

BING: I'd say take your things and move where you're having the affair.

WALTERS: And you wouldn't talk to her or see her?

BING: No.

WALTERS: This daughter whom you adore?

BING: Yes.

Bing and Barbara Walters singing in the rain before their interview.

Your editor's view about this was simply that Bing was saying what most fathers of his generation would have said at that time. Also he was hardly likely to indicate on national TV that the behaviour outlined by Ms Walters was acceptable to him. Like most dads he would have been trying to ensure that his children didn't get themselves into vulnerable situations at a young age. Steven Lewis commented as follows:

> I do have a different view of Bing's 'take no prisoners' approach to his children's potential amorous liaisons. I think Bing was firing a warning shot to any would-be suitors who might try to take advantage of his daughter. I don't for a moment believe he actually meant what he said about disowning her if she 'shacked up' with a boyfriend. Recall that Bing didn't disown any of his four sons from his first marriage even though their numerous affairs and drunken, brawling behavior certainly could have justified such action. Recall Bing moved his second family away from Hollywood to San Francisco in the mid 1960s to get away from the influences that helped destroy his first family. I think he was determined to prevent the same fate for his second family.

This led Clive Menadue to respond to Steven with:

> As you are probably still a "mere youth" as Bing would have said, you might not realize that your opinions tend to harden as you get older and Bing was reacting with unease to a rapidly changing social scene that seemed to be chipping away at many things he held dear.

I am sure that many of us can identify with those sentiments. Sue Horn then raised a question.

> Have any of you ever known an Irish-Catholic father who didn't make sweeping statements like this to keep his kids in line, though the kids themselves knew that there was really nothing behind it? Funny thing is that Mary Frances did wait until after her dad had passed away to move in with her boyfriend, and I think it was out of respect not fear. My father came out with the same type of epithets and ultimatums. He had four girls who all came of age in the 70s (poor fellow), and I think he did a mighty fine job with us. He never saw any of his girls married, unfortunately, because his love for Old Gold cigarettes robbed him of what should have been the last years of his life. All of us tried to do him proud, however, before and after his death. Did we do things he disagreed with? Sometimes. Did he ever enforce the overly strict sanctions he'd threatened us with? No. Did he seem any less in our eyes for that inconsistency? No. Did we try any less hard to make him happy with our choices even though we knew we'd win him over in the end? No. My pop and Bing had a lot in common that way, and at least in my case, I knew how much he loved us and that is all that mattered.

This brought forth agreement from Cathie Wilson.

> I have to agree with Sue that being raised with an Irish

Catholic parent can be akin to having a Carmelite Sister Superior in the house. When I started to date "himself" who was Anglo/Irish non Catholic you would have thought I had set about to murder the Pope. Bing's sister Mary Rose and I were good friends and she frequently revealed that Bing took his mother's teaching to heart and passed them on to both families. Not easy having to live up to the precepts laid down by an Irish dad or mum. While I don't think Bing would have disowned Mary Frances because of dating habits he disapproved of, I think he could have been pretty hard to be around for any length of time.

To continue on the theme of Bing's views on the 1970s contemporary scene, just after Bing's death, *The Tidings* (Southern California's Catholic Weekly) carried the headline shown below.

Bing Chides TV Industry

The article continued . . .

Television executives are fond of justifying current, TV fare with the claim that they are only depicting life, as it is. Bing Crosby disagreed. "I fear that they are depicting life as it is going to be if they are not diverted. This seems like a very unattractive prospect to me," he said.

Crosby's comment came in the last of two guest columns he had written for the *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner*. It was published the day after he died. Earlier this year, Mr. Crosby had spent some time in the hospital, and it gave him an opportunity to watch plenty of television. Evidently he didn't like much of what he saw.

"It became apparent to me that very slowly and very subtly writers and producers are working in nudity, permissiveness, irresponsibility, profanity, scenes of semi-explicit sex, provocative dialogue, smutty innuendoes and situations into their shows. Moral responsibility is almost indiscernible," Crosby wrote.

"Now I abhor censorship. Another word I dislike is boycott. But the inability of the former to be useful will surely produce the latter. Already there are little groups all over the country - groups of concerned people who want to do something about this before it's too late."

Crosby rejected appeals to the First Amendment as an argument for the protection of current TV fare. "A citizen can say or do anything he wants out on the street unless he breaks the law," he wrote, "but he shouldn't be allowed to come into a man's house and fill his TV set with prurient material. It certainly is not the type of thing that you want your children to see daily. Its effect can't be anything else but harmful.

"They see these chic, sophisticated people behaving immorally, salaciously. People living together without benefit of marriage must be the thing to do, they think. Must be clever or attractive. Kids, you know, are indelibly impressed by anything they see in a film done by attractive, famous people," said Crosby.

"I happen to believe that the family is the basis for a sound society," he wrote. "A good strong society makes for a good strong community, and you get enough good strong communities and you've got a strong nation."

There are "some serious consequences involved," and Crosby expressed his "fervent prayer that responsible people in the business - people of principle - will exert their influence in an effort to eliminate this highly objectionable material."

So a serious but sincere closing message from Bing. Another (unidentified) paper carried a similar article by Sam J. Taylor, which also touched on the Barbara Walters interview, under the heading:

'A Message From Bing'

I write on the night of Bing Crosby's death. When you read this, many thousands of words and pictures will have given broadcast and printed tribute to this beloved American. He most certainly deserves all of these tributes. It may sound trite, but I, like millions of others, feel a personal loss.

In a newscast tonight, a video-taped interview, made this year with Bing, was shown. The TV reporter [Barbara Walters] asked him what he felt he'd communicated to his countless fans around the world. Crosby replied, "Entertainment, that's all. There was really no message in the work I've done."

WE DISAGREE. The gift of a half-century of delightful, wholesome entertainment is a monumental message in itself. However, just five days before his death, Bing did leave a stated message. He wrote a guest column in a Los Angeles newspaper about one of the entertainment forms in which he excelled, motion pictures. It's a message movie-makers should heed. I would like to quote extensively from Bing's words.

"...Hollywood studios, as well as foreign film makers, are turning out pictures that are wanted by only a minority of the potential movie-going population - a ridiculous situation that could be changed by the film fans if they asserted themselves in volume.

"With exception of a handful of intensely promoted blockbusters'...that come along each year...the average motion picture draws less than 15 per cent of the people who are basically movie fans."

Crosby continued: "...the major studios try to put out a couple of smash hits each season, hoping these will offset the losses on the also-rans, while the small independents mostly focus on what they call 'exploitation' films and some frankly go in for low-cost X-rated pornography. The recent general trend to more and more permissiveness, especially in sex and violence, has attracted big attendances to a limited number of films, but has alienated millions who used to go to the wholesome movies every week or oftener."

Bing then referred to "free assists, publicity-wise" given to the "broadly permissive attractions" and less-than-adequate publicity campaigns given to "clean"

pictures. He urged movie-goers to convey their views to cinema operators in their communities.

In referring to his desire to do an occasional movie again, Bing said, "I've read dozens of scripts, ...and haven't found a decent one in the lot."

Bing Crosby was never a contentious man. Rarely, if ever, did he become involved in even a minor dispute with an associate in the entertainment industry. There may have been those who felt that, as a Catholic, he should have spoken out more often against those responsible for the moral decline in films and recordings.

But that was not Bing's way. Instead he inspired by example. And by hope. Here is the final paragraph from Bing Crosby's article published Oct. 9, 1977:

> *"One ray of hope that I see on the horizon is the increasing interest in nostalgia, both on the screen and on the Broadway stage. There was a lot of wonderful creativity in many of the old days - note that I didn't say 'good' old days - even in the depression era of the 1930's. There are always better days ahead if we just make the most of them - and that's a thought I'd like to leave with the new generation."*
>
> **Sam J. Taylor**

As you can see, Clive Menadue was probably fairly accurate with his comments on the Museum board but nevertheless I'm sure Bing's comments strike a chord with many of us.

A few years after Bing's death, Mary Crosby gave an in-depth interview herself which makes fascinating reading and ties in with our previous articles.

An interview with Mary Crosby: "My Father, Bing Crosby"

by Sheila Weller, McCall's, July 1980

"My one regret is that Daddy isn't here to share the tremendous joys of my life right now," says 20-year-old Mary Crosby, Bing's only daughter and a star of TVs top-rated Dallas. "But other than that" — she instantly shifts from dreamy to direct — "I am very clear on his death. Daddy died while he was still very much a man, while he still had control of the lives of the people he loved. If he'd lived much longer, he would have had great pain in dealing with the fact that his children were making choices he couldn't approve of."

"My decision to live with the man I loved before committing my life to him in marriage is something that went against all Daddy's beliefs. He had painted himself into a corner by telling Barbara Walters he would disown me if I ever did that. I would have confronted him with my decision and, though I believe his love and trust would have eventually won out over his anger, it would have wounded his pride terribly to have had to give in. I'm grateful that I never had to use one of Daddy's greatest lessons to me — that there is a time to be selfish — in a way that would have hurt him, hurt us both, in those last years of his life."

This honesty — the ability to confront conflicts and pressures with unequivocal clarity and grace — is the first thing that strikes you about Mary Crosby. It seemed logical to expect something else: cautiously dutiful talk from the wide-eyed young girl you had watched for almost two decades singing "White Christmas" and extolling the merits of orange juice with her famous, perfect family.

"I used to give part answers," Mary admits, "until I realized people could see through them, that there was much more dignity — for everyone — in telling the truth." Besides, getting to the point of things has always been her style. "Mary was wiser, more directed and tuned into her needs at seventeen than most people I knew twice her age," says her husband of one and a half years, 28-year-old singer-songwriter Eb Lottimer. Leonard Katzman, "Dallas" producer, agrees. "One of the reasons I hired her for the role of Kristin was her innate maturity, which I knew would enable her to play a sophisticated role. Mary has an incredibly level head on her shoulders. She knows exactly what makes her happy."

"I've just always been very focused," says the girl who got her Actor's Equity card at the age of four, entered college at 15, left with a clear conscience at 16, and was certain she'd found her life's mate a year later. "Daddy used to say" — she smiles tenderly — "Mary, you were born thirty-two."

Yet she looks 17 — if that. Without a smidgen of makeup, her face has none of the hard sexuality she brings to the role of the nymphet who schemes her way through the maze of weekly intrigue at Southfork Ranch. In fact, sitting barefoot in her leotard on this wooden chair in her cozy, three-tiered cottage, her waist-length hair flowing over her back, she looks as wholesome as Mom and apple pie.

Two sheepdogs and two cats roam the house. Past the deck, with its roughhewn swing-built-for-two, the Pacific Ocean gleams through a crevice between scrubby mountains. Mary and Eb were married on that deck, reciting vows they had written and singing a folk-rock love song they'd composed together. At twilight they ride their horses down that Malibu hill. They socialize rarely; they are "very into health." Her life seems so moored in this post-counterculture rusticity that when she points with pride to a favorite picture — Bing in a tux and she, coifed, in a chiffon gown, singing a TV duet — you want to rub your eyes. That slickness contradicts everything about the young woman you are sitting with.

"But it was Daddy, really, who gave me the great sense of privacy that my life is all about. This house, for example." She laughs. "Even the people Eb and I invite over can't find it! Daddy raised my two brothers and me in Hillsborough (a San Francisco suburb) on purpose — to protect us. His Hollywood days were over by then.

Mostly, he did his hunting and his golfing and came home to be the man of the house — and that house was ONLY family. He saw friends like Bob Hope — oh, maybe once every three years. To this day, I have never been to a Hollywood party, though it would probably be good for my career. In fact, I was so sheltered that, when I first met Larry [Hagman, who stars as the suavely corrupt oil scion, J.R. Ewing in Dallas], I said, "Oh, and how did you get into the business?" She throws back her head and laughs again. "I didn't know he was Mary Martin's son!"

Mary and her Dad at the Pasadena show.

So it was not, really, the fact that Mary was the daughter of one of the world's most beloved entertainers that shaped her intriguing blend of wholesomeness and savvy, idealism and precociousness. It was something else. This girl who looks so young, yet has matured so quickly — who is equally sweet and strong — became that way because that was the ONLY way you could turn out as the one daughter, among six sons, of a patriarch with very rigid ideas about morality and behavior, a man whose affection had to be deftly read between the lines, whose vulnerabilities were safely hidden for 70 years in his male-to-male exchanges and the shielding protocol that comes with being the older traditional husband to a younger traditional wife. There was only one person who could find the chink in Bing Crosby's armour, who could love him in a disarming new way that would teach him something, who had to gently fence with him to assert — even find — her true self. And that person was Mary.

"You know something? I don't think poor Daddy had the vaguest idea of what to do with a girl. He'd had four sons on his first marriage, and I was wedged between Harry and Nathaniel and was a terrible tomboy, beating both of them up until I was eleven — when they started to beat ME up. Daddy would treat me like a boy — teaching me to shoot, taking me on safaris to Africa — and then turn around and get wonderfully befuddled by what he'd just done. 'Wait a minute, I can't take her duck hunting: she's a girl!' And 'What the heck is she doing out there playing football? Oh, yeah … that's right … I taught her.'"

"But I had my special little-girl ways of showing my love for him. My mother was smart enough to say, 'I don't know how to cook' — which of course wasn't true. So on the days the housekeeper was off I'd make Daddy's meals for him: burnt eggs, overboiled soup. I'd bring them to him on a tray while he sat watching the football game on TV. He never looked up from that game — that was his style — but I could FEEL his love."

"That's what my communication with Daddy was all about: We understood much more about each other than each of us ever let on: there was an awful lot of love there, but it was so unspoken. He'd been raised in a large family of staunch Irish Catholics. In contrast to Mother — who is a soft, warm, affectionate Southern lady — he was very uncomfortable with expressing his feelings. He'd use sarcasm or criticism to slip in a compliment upside down. Or we'd hear of his praise from other people. If I kissed him goodnight, he'd pull away. If I hugged him too long, he'd squirm. It was fun playing against his resistance, because I knew he secretly loved the tenderness he found so hard to express."

"Daddy was also not above emotional blackmail, but I could spar with him on that too. Because he was an older father [55 when Mary was born] there was a sense we all got from Mother that we had to protect him, that each day with him was precious. So when he wanted us to do something we didn't want to do, he'd moan, 'Look, I don't know how much longer I'll be around.' I'd just say, 'Hey, waaait a minute! I don't buy that garbage!' He was sly: he would try to have it both ways — the patriarch and the martyr."

"But underneath all of that he was a lovely, honest, MODEST man who didn't consider himself a fount of wisdom, who understood his mistakes. He had been hurt by people he'd helped out over the years who never repaid him, and I got the sense that he would have wished more from his first four sons than he'd gotten. Maybe that's why he wanted perfection from the three of us."

Kathryn Crosby, Mary's mother, was the executor of that perfection. "She got all the dirty work, really: molding us, disciplining us, spanking us. It worked perfectly, in terms of producing results for Dad. And I do think Mother's hit-and-hug philosophy probably left us more secure and resilient — able to know that, if we were punished for one specific thing, it didn't mean they'd stopped loving us — than if we'd been disciplined in more indirect, lingering ways."

"Still, I can't say we always played our mother-daughter roles very well. I resisted some of her command and control. But all that would vanish over the summer months when Mother and I worked in dinner theater together. There was no hierarchy dividing us then. We weren't parent and child — just two actresses, independent and equal. She would tell me things that led me to feel I didn't have to fall into the roles or patterns other people set up. 'I wanted the three of you,' she said several times, 'but you know, Mary, not every woman has to become a mother.' (The only people who ever called me Mary FRANCES were my mom's relatives

and the press — and my mom if I'd done something she was displeased with.) As much as she demanded obedience at home, there was always that other message — think for yourself, be your own person — slipping in, too."

So when Mary was invited to spend her 13th year as an exchange student living in the home of a large Mexican family, Kathryn was delighted, supportive. But Bing was not.

"He got a little sulky about it. For four months all my letters and phone calls to him went unanswered. But I kept on writing, telling him about all I was learning and how I understood how he was 'too busy' to write. What I was really saying, between the lines, was, 'Look, I know you have to stay mad at me because you made a stand and you can't back down from it. I just want you to know I understand — and if you do change your mind, I promise I won't call you on it.'"

Her veiled communiqué was answered when Bing phoned her one day, his voice shaking, "I'm about to have an operation," he said, "and I want to ask you a favor. I want you to come home."

"Of course I'll come home," I told him. Then he shocked me by saying 'I'm sorry about the way I acted, but that's just the way I am. I'm not going to change now. But I want you to know I really love you — and I NEED you now.'" Mary's eyes mist at the memory. "That was such an incredibly hard thing for him to do — apologizing like that, admitting his need."

Bing survived the operation — the removal of a lung — and though he pretended to continue to disapprove of Mary's time in Mexico, "after the year was up" — she smiles cagily — "he was bragging to EVERYONE that his daughter was bilingual." They were set in a pattern: he, keeping up his strict, taciturn facade; she, using her quietly learned empathy to help him keep up that front, despite her secret knowledge of his vulnerability.

As part of this pact of unspoken love through not one but two generation gaps, "Daddy and I never even tried to talk about me and boys. He just laid down his ultimatums and I didn't dispute them; it would have been ridiculous to try." Yet he did consent to Mary's going off to the University of Texas in Austin after she had graduated from high school at the tender age of 15. "But the funny thing is, I felt OLDER than my sorority sisters. I was always taking care of them. Underneath their sweet, innocent, Southern game, they were the biggest bunch of little drinkers I'd ever met in my life! They wanted four years of playing — time enough to find husbands. That is not what I wanted. I wanted to act."

So after a few semesters she left — for San Francisco's prestigious American Conservatory Theater, which was close enough to the Crosby home for Mary to commute, albeit inconveniently. "Daddy approved. But he also said, 'If you want to be an actress, I'm not going to help you. I want you to make it on your own.' and I said, 'Good. Because I wouldn't have it any other way.'"

During this period of Mary's budding independence, the Crosbys traveled together to New York to perform at the Uris Theater. "I remember one day walking with Daddy through the streets of Manhattan — blocks and blocks and blocks. The whole time he was doing something he had never done before — holding my hand. That little gesture meant so much to me because it had taken him so long to get there. And it made me think I might have even taught him something."

It was during the trip that Mary made friends with a young man, Barclay Lottimer, the son of a Virginia economist, who had a very strong hunch that she would get along with his brother Eb, a handsome young singer-songwriter who was finishing his classes at the University of California at Santa Cruz.

When Mary returned to California, Eb called and they had a "telephone relationship" for two weeks. "That was such a nice way to begin," Mary says. "We could debate, argue, discuss things — without anything physical getting in the way. Those conversations just flew. He was funny, he was intelligent, he was creative; I was attracted to Eb before I even met him — which was important to me, because I didn't want to waste my time on an unproductive, superficial relationship." That last thought is fascinating coming from a then-17-year-old girl. It's something you hear a lot of women in the 30s saying. "Well," Mary says when this thought is expressed, "you don't have to go through a lot of bad experiences to know you don't want them."

On January 14, 1977, Eb and Mary each set out for a stretch of beach that was exactly halfway between Santa Cruz and San Francisco. She had the picnic dinner, he had the wine. She was looking for a blue truck, he a silver Monza. "We pulled into the parking lot at exactly the same time," Mary remembers. "We were instantly keyed into each other's electricity," he recalls. "We fell in love."

The next step — taken, judiciously, months later — was telling Bing. By now, the news would come right on the heels of Mary's decision to move from her father's home to an apartment of her own, closer to her acting classes. "I just said, 'Daddy, I have a very special friend coming over for lunch today. PLEASE be courteous.'"

"I wasn't really intimidated at the prospect of meeting Mr. Crosby," Eb recalls. "But, legend that he was and because I myself was entering the music business, I would have liked to have gotten to know him a little better than I did. I mean, I respected the fact that he was very protective of his only daughter, but ...."

"What happened," Mary says, interpreting her husband's tactfulness, "is Daddy came downstairs, said, 'How do you do?' then proceeded to turn on the baseball game — which he watched all during lunch. The primo moment came when we were saying grace. There's Daddy, checking Eb out from the corner of his eye, making sure he's crossing himself."

After lunch, Mary and her father set out to look at the apartment Bing had chosen for her. "It was classic: a dorm for older ladies with dowdy little rooms with mismatched '50s furniture and a huge mahogany dining room — and waiters! I was trying so hard not to giggle. I looked at him and said, 'You've got to be kidding.' He

just shrugged and said, 'Well, you can't blame me for trying.'"

Mary finally moved into an apartment in a Victorian-style house and, as their romance progressed, she and Eb talked about living together. "I'm kind of old-fashioned," Eb says. "I was very serious about Mary. She's every song I've ever written: a passionate, supportive, at-peace-with-herself lady who's never priggish. I wanted to marry her, but I wanted us to live together first, to give the marriage a firm base."

"The decision to spend every day of your life with someone was much too important — to both of us — to rush into blindly or rashly," Mary stresses. There is a hint of a plea in her earnest voice — and you're touched by the fact that, in almost any other context, this wholesome, devoted young couple would not have to go to such lengths to justify what is now a fairly commonplace choice. But when you're Bing Crosby's daughter, it's different (as the stacks of hate mail she later received from her father's fans attest). They waited, and talked about confronting him, and put it off. It would upset him, they knew. Yet didn't they have their own lives to live?

On October 14, 1977, Mary was rehearsing in the A.C.T. production of Julius Caesar when an aide to the theater's director called her out of the chorus and told her the director wanted to talk to her. "I was the third lady of easy virtue to the left, so I knew it wasn't my performance he needed to discuss. I felt my throat tighten a little, and the minute I saw the man's face I felt sorry that he was the one who had to give me the news that my father was dead."

Mary is hurt about stories that she and Eb moved in together right after Bing's death. "It didn't happen that way, not nearly that fast," she says. "And reading that publicity was hard on Mother. The stories came out negatively like, 'What kind of woman would raise a daughter to live with a boy?' It was very unfair. She had no defense. It caused a lot of unnecessary pain.

"I'm not saying that the publicity was the only thing that upset her. Our living together unmarried probably went against a lot of what she too was brought up to believe." Did they fight over it? "I'm an independent person, living my own life" is Mary's firm reply. "I don't think that's something my mother had too much to say about. I cannot speak for her, nor she for me. But," she hastens to point out — softly now — "she's always had a lot of faith in my judgement."

Still, Kathryn Crosby did NOT attend Mary and Eb's wedding, which took place November 24, 1978, and was, as Mary puts it, "a joyous celebration of our love," with food she had been preparing for weeks, music by Eb's since-disbanded rock band, and the request that "our friends bring their presence, not presents."

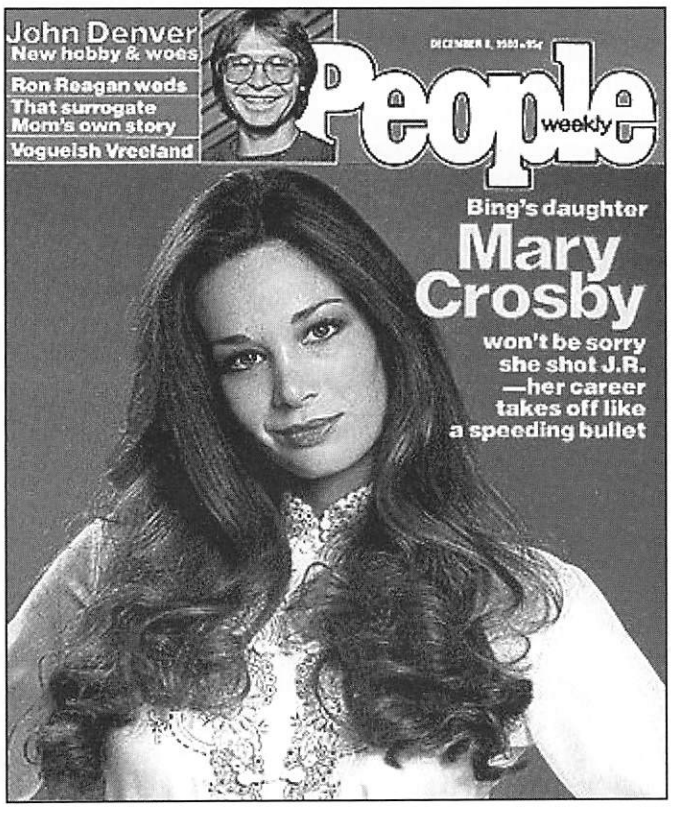
She is proud of the relationship she now has with her mother. "She's in Hillsborough, and I'm in L.A., so distance prevents us from seeing a whole lot of each other, but we have very strong phone contact — talking, oh, I'd say, every two weeks. Whenever she's in L.A. she comes over. We understand each other. We're both very into our own separate lives. The love is strong. She's stopped acting for a while to concentrate almost exclusively on finishing her book about life with Daddy. I can't wait to read it. And she really likes my work in Dallas."

Mary has appeared in 20 out of last season's 24 segments, and she soon begins shooting more for next year. She's proud of the way she has portrayed "that tacky lady who's soooo different from me." Still, after a year of crooked smiles in decolletage and bikinis, she's eager to begin her role as a kind of Maid Marian to two English highway robbers in a forthcoming movie for British TV [Dick Turpin]. "At last," she says, sighing with exaggerated ardor, "I get to play a virgin!"

Bing would be delighted at that. But then he would probably really be delighted — albeit secretly — with everything about Mary's life now. Even her decision to go against the Crosby grain and have "only one child — I'm sure of that — and then not for lots and lots of years." Why? "It's not rebellion; nothing in my life has been that. It's just that I have too much else I want to enjoy for a while. Daddy taught me that there is a time to be selfish. My parents also taught me — really, through everything — to be an individual, to make up my own mind."

In that regard — and with beautiful results — Mary Crosby has, as the folks down at Southfork would say, done her daddy proud.

POSTSCRIPT: As we know, sadly, Mary and Eb eventually divorced. Mary is now happily married to Mark Brodka and they have two children.



Mary was featured on the front of People magazine in 1980 after shooting J.R.

One Sweet Letter From You

Members' views, opinions and comments are always welcomed and we have great pleasure in reproducing some of the letters received since the last issue

Bob Achorn, Sutton, MA, USA

Several sightings involving the Crosby career:

— *Classic Images*, a monthly devoted to old movies, publishes a calendar column. The author, Manny Rainho, wrote this for May 2:

"1903. Bing Crosby, arguably the greatest entertainer of the 20th Century, was born Harry Lillis Crosby in Tacoma, Washington. Crosby is one of only two stars to top the box office list five consecutive years, Burt Reynolds being the other. In 1944, Crosby topped the list, won an Oscar, had 14 Top 40 hits, including four No. 1's, and had the fourth most popular radio show of the year. His records topped the Billboard chart 23 of the 52 weeks that year. In his career he had nearly 400 Top 40 hits. No one has ever come close to accomplishing these feats."

(Off by a day, but otherwise to the point.)

— Terry Teachout, drama and music critic, assembled this year a book of his commentaries, under the modest title of *A Terry Teachout Reader*. His observations on Bing were included, as "Crosby Major, Crosby Minor" — Teachout's reaction to the Gary Giddins volume.

"How could so bright a star have dimmed so fast?," asks Teachout. "Was there less to Bing Crosby than met the ear?" He likes the Giddins book but contends that Giddins, not a musician, "lacks the technical knowledge to explain fully what he is hearing."

Teachout praises Bing's early jazz work and scat singing, but argues that Bing damaged his voice in the early 1930s and also lost most interest in jazz. He asserts that Jack Kapp turned Bing into the musical equivalent of a Norman Rockwell Saturday Evening Post cover (not desirable, in Teachout's view). While Crosby showed taste and sensitivity in much of his later work, his interpretations lacked energy and ardor, seeming almost detached. "Unlike Sinatra, he was never a confessional artist." These are implied as reasons why "Crosby's fame did not longer survive his death in 1977."

Still, Teachout concludes that Crosby "was a nonpareil jazz singer who has been unfairly written out of the history of the music he helped to shape, as well as a balladeer of magical sensitivity and irresistible vitality."

— Another view of Bing is offered by Scott Yanow in *Classic Jazz*, a book concentrating on the years from 1895 to 1933. In Bing's early records, Yanow says, "Crosby showed that he could be a top jazz singer whenever he wanted." He argues that Bing's "love for early jazz and Dixieland (shown in the films *Pennies from Heaven, The Birth of the Blues* and *High Society*) would be quite consistent through his long career."

Yanow urges those interested to listen particularly to Bing' s Columbia records, pre-1934, including "Anyone Can See with Half an Eye I'm Crazy Over You."

— As you reported in your last issue, the American Film Institute offered another of its "greatest" shows on ABC television in the USA in June. This one was "AFI 100 - 100 Songs — Greatest Music in the Movies." It was the usual AFI melange, trying to provide the greatest variety and diversity to capture the largest possible audience for its three-hour run. That meant fast-paced cuts, incorporating varied styles, plenty of dance and lots of filmed color—none of those demands doing much for Bing (never a favorite of AFI voters.).

There was much Garland, Astaire, Streisand and a bit of Sinatra. But the program did manage to squeeze in three Crosby hits: at No. 95, "Road to Morocco" (the duet with Bob Hope), at No. 37, "Swinging on a Star" and at No. 5, the obligatory "White Christmas." With only 100 minutes (excluding advertising) allowed for 100 songs, no number was presented in full. There was simple commentary, too, with Michael Feinstein, Paul Simon, Peter Boyle and Marvin Hamlisch providing current faces who could work in a word or two about the Crosby numbers.

Bing managed to sing at least 346 songs in films over 34 years, a record unlikely to be matched by anyone. No doubt AFI could have found 100 outstanding songs and performances by Bing alone, but that is obviously not the way the system works and would not mesmerize today's television audience, if Teachout is to be taken at face value.

In any event, it was pleasant for AFI to work in bits of Bing, all of it in dreaded black-and-white clips (black-and-white being a signal to viewers to switch instantly to a different channel.)

(Editor: Thanks, Bob, and talking of the Gary Giddins volume, many people keep asking me how Gary is getting on with volume 2 of his book about Bing. He kindly brought us up to date as you will read.)

Gary Giddins, New York, USA

I'm of course pleased and moved that people are eager to read the second volume, which I dearly wish I could afford to work on full-time. Those readers don't want to hear excuses, but they have to realize that, for most of us, biography is not how we pay the bills. I had hoped, and my editor gave me reason to believe, that volume 1 would be successful enough to allow me to write volume 2 in peace. Unfortunately, my editor was dismissed the week of publication and the publisher dropped the ball. Thus far, I haven't seen a dime in royalties. So I'm plugging away on projects that pay the bills, one of which I hope will net me a year's time, which is all it would take to finish a draft. In the meantime, Bing is something I work on when I can—a few hours a week.

I have recently done a number of interesting new interviews with members of the family and I am optimistic that the second volume will be better than the first. I'm very happy with the two sections I've done the most work on, regarding the Leo McCarey films and the switch from live to canned radio. But it's going to be a couple of years more, at least. On the other hand, it won't take as long as Robert Caro's LBJ or the recently completed Graham Greene!

I heard some distressing news the other day from an executive at Sony, which as you may know is now merging with BMG. I have been trying to get them to issue a compilation of early Bing with and without Whiteman, and have gotten the runaround for four years. This executive told

me that when I initially made the proposal, it was brought up for discussion and a call was made to MCA to find out the sales of the four-CD box it had recently released. The sales figures were so bad, Sony immediately stopped any talk of a Crosby project. Now this doesn't entirely make sense to me; if MCA did so poorly, why did it subsequently release several other Crosby discs, like the complete Andrews Sisters collaborations and the gold records set? Yet there you have it.

I hope "Swingin' with Bing!" is successful (I've written a glowing review of it for *Jazz Times*), but it seems essential that someone release a major collection of studio recordings omitting the Crosby chestnuts that are released repeatedly—Christmas songs, "Swinging on a Star," etc.—so that a true reappraisal can continue to find traction. Even the "Swingin'" collection has too many tracks, mostly on the first disc, that are far from swinging. They will please Bing fans but not jazz fans who are skittish about Bing. And, paradoxical though it may seem in regard to the most popular singer of the 20th century, expanding his audience beyond true believers has to be a priority.

Regards to you and all ICC members.

(Editor: Our sympathies must be with Gary who has got to earn a living first and foremost. He will finish his book in due course and it will be well worth waiting for. Disappointing to read about the Sony developments but let's hope that "Swingin' With Bing" does well.)

Gary Giddins with Judy Schmid at Patsy's in New York in October. Photo taken by Nancy Sinatra who was hosting an event there.

Judy Schmid, 853 Livingston Ave, Syracuse, NY 13210, USA

Having just spent a wonderful few hours reviewing BING magazines from 1996 to the present - after purchasing some older copies via eBay - I felt compelled to write. As some folks may know, I didn't join the ICC until recently, having let my 1970s membership in "Club Crosby" lapse. Reviewing these older magazines which were new to me was a terrific eye-opener!

I got to see updates on television specials that had participation from some knowledgeable Crosby people - specials I'd seen and were disappointed in - now understanding the manipulation, sadly, which went on after interviews were taped. I got to read letters from people I've now met and some even befriended, continuously amazed at their knowledge of "All Things Bing". I saw terrific photos and stories from long-time Crosby fans, complete with their "The Day I Met Bing" stories - brilliant! And the artwork by young Jon - wow!

I also saw the evolution of Malcolm's book and Gary Giddins' book, right there on those glossy pages! Of course, I'm kicking myself for letting 'real life' distract me from Bing since his passing and wish I learned of the ICC earlier - it's tough to grieve a loss when you feel alone and being part of the ICC in 1977 would've helped.

I'm constantly amazed at people's attention to detail - I USED to think I knew a lot about Bing, but compared to other folks, well, I'm a mere bystander! And I truly chuckled when I read the letters "Bing's voice was better in this certain time period...", discussions that continue to this day on Steven Lewis' Internet Bing-site.

I'm happy to have connected with this fine organization, and am pleased to have played some small role, albeit belatedly, in helping commemorate Bing's 100th. I've got new friends, a wonderful tool to help educate my daughter on Bing's gifts, and a vehicle to help me travel around the world, all set to the music of Mr. Crosby! Thanks to all who've been affiliated with the ICC in any way - I'm so happy to be part of the group!

Can't wait for the next magazine!

PS - I'm interested in purchasing additional older copies of BING magazine - you can write to me or e-mail me at schmid@twcny.rr.com if you'd like to sell duplicates of ANYTHING published by the ICC!

Ken Merry, Doncaster, South Yorkshire, DN4 5JX, UK

The only advantage the ancient ones have over the young is a wider range of comparisons, perspectives, evaluations and what the post-1950s lot think is only about fish and chips — taste. It is inevitable that the post-1950s lot (I cannot think of any other suitable description) have taken all positions of influence and authority - and look what they have made of popular music, which makes Babel sound like a rest room. They know little about the pre-1950s and this is why all these recurring lists in the media; the Best 100 of this and the Best 100 of the other etc. are about as valuable as a politician's promise.

To them Bing is a forgotten man but Bing (or the whole of our era) does not need their approbation. The truth is there in the journals, books, newspapers, newsreels, archives, records, films, personal accounts, histories; in the minds and ears of those of us still surviving in this modern madcap soap opera which is laughable but not funny.

On a happier subject, the welcome lists of the lesser recorded Bing tracks in the current magazine #137, reminds one of the few rarities of affectionate memory which one finds irresistible for reasons that cannot be defined.

'Never Before': sung by Bing on a radio show.

'The Next Time It Happens': Reg Bristo had a strong feeling for this one

'I've Never Been In Love Before': A fine song from *Guys*

And Dolls; left out of the film.

'The Rose In Her Hair': On the *Feels Good / Feels Right* set. I find the arrangement accompanying Bing's voice deeply haunting.

Jay Lineberry, Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

I've received two issues of BING and it certainly is impressive! For me, there were some irritating references to Sinatra in the most recent issue. I already had a copy of the article by Thomas Sowell. Overall it's a good article on Bing, but to dismiss Sinatra as merely a singer who had his day certainly compromises any claim to authority that Sowell might have.

Member Lorne Harasen was "irked" by Larry King, on his TV show, asking "why Crosby's legend hadn't carried like Presley's and Sinatra's," and he proceeded to irk me by his comparisons of Bing and Frank. I think he was irritated by the way King's question was worded, because your publication freely acknowledges the decline in Bing's popularity, and King was inquiring as to the reason for this decline. Gary Giddins raises the same question in the introduction to his book on Crosby. I agree with Mr Harasen that good traits don't tend to "make news", but after offering this as an explanation of why Crosby isn't as "legendary" as Sinatra and Presley, he goes on to indicate that Crosby is more legendary because no "religious feast day or patriotic observance or sport is associated with Frank Sinatra or Elvis Presley." Ironically, Giddins suggests that the tarnishing of Bing's image after his death may have contributed to the decline in his popularity. Mr Harasen says Bing "didn't 'punch out' or threaten writers he didn't like nor did he keep company with questionable associates," implying that Frank did these things. He says that Jimmy Carter called Bing "a good man", implying that Frank was not. Bing's public image during his lifetime was probably classier than Frank's, but Frank helped a lot of people, and none of his children wrote a bad book about him. Forgive me for that last remark, but Mr Harasen's comparisons practically beg me to make that comment. As for Presley, he may be a legend, but, in my opinion, musically he doesn't belong in the company of Bing and Frank.

As I indicated earlier, I agree with Mr Harasen that good qualities don't tend to make news. I myself wrote a letter to a reviewer of the Giddins book who said that Bing would never be an icon such as Presley or Marilyn Monroe in which I said "the obvious thing that Bing does not have in common with your 'folk heroes' is an early, self-inflicted death." I hasten to add that I like Monroe.

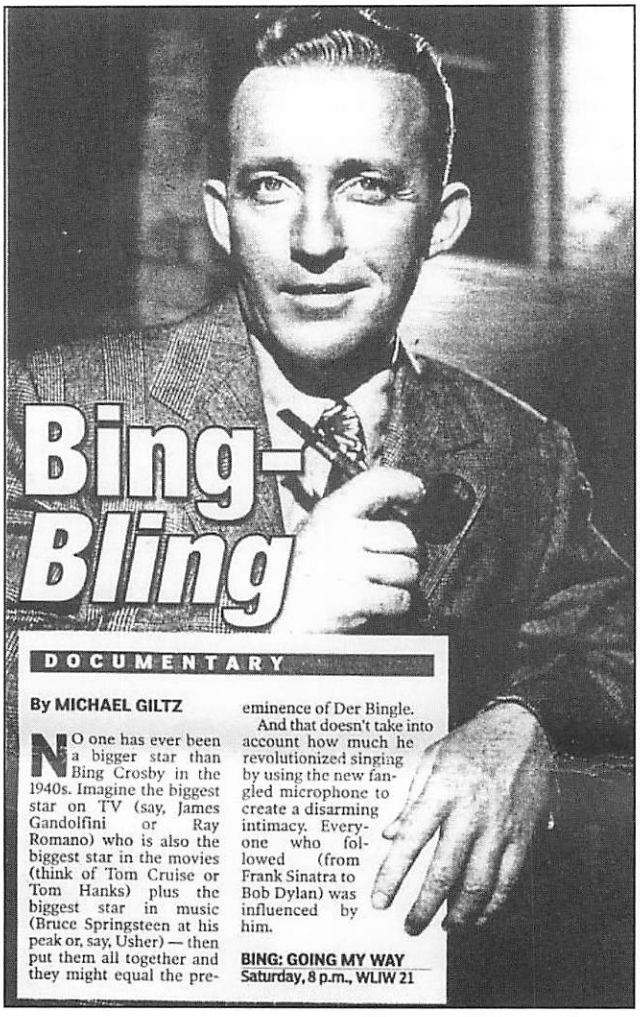
PS. I think Crosby's popularity has declined (although he's obviously still popular) because the public's taste has declined.

Lorraine Myers, Long Island, USA - by e-mail.

I subscribed to the BINGANG for many years, then met you and Wig at the Hofstra University Bing Crosby Conference and signed up for The International Club Crosby and now happily receive BING magazine. Recently I received this summer's issue and took note of the documentary film written about on page 45 namely: *Bing: Going My Way* originally from the Spokane TV station KSPS. My husband and I saw it on August 21, here outside New York City (out on Long Island) on Channel 21 and were delighted to watch it. Even the two of you, plus others we saw at Hofstra were in this wonderfully put together documentary about Bing! I took note of it in the New York Times weekly Television Guide and circled it for this evening, so we wouldn't miss it. It was wonderful!

When we attended the Hofstra Conference they ran out of Mrs. Crosby's latest book *My Last Years with Bing* but my husband was able to order a copy of it from a local book store. I brought along to the conference a hardcover book *Bing and other things* written by Kathryn Crosby in 1967 and she was kind enough to personally inscribe it for me. I was so pleased. It was a great conference for all us Bing fans!

The No. 137 issue of BING took a lot of effort to put together. Thanks.


Bing-Bling
DOCUMENTARY
By MICHAEL GILTZ
NO one has ever been a bigger star than Bing Crosby in the 1940s. Imagine the biggest star on TV (say, James Gandolfini or Ray Romano) who is also the biggest star in the movies (think of Tom Cruise or Tom Hanks) plus the biggest star in music (Bruce Springsteen at his peak or, say, Usher) — then put them all together and they might equal the pre-eminence of Der Bingle.
And that doesn't take into account how much he revolutionized singing by using the new fangled microphone to create a disarming intimacy. Everyone who followed (from Frank Sinatra to Bob Dylan) was influenced by him.
BING: GOING MY WAY
Saturday, 8 p.m., WLIW 21

Harvey M. Sheirr, New York City, USA

I watched the documentary, "Bing! Going My Way" on Saturday on channel 21, a PBS station in New York City. It was excellent.

I also want to tell you about a program that appeared on July 25th. It was on WNYC-FM (93.9) in New York City. At the same time it is on XM satellite radio. It was Jonathan Schwartz's show, which runs from 12 noon to 4pm. every Saturday and Sunday. Mr Schwartz is a famous disc jockey in New York. He is the son of Arthur Schwartz, the famous composer of such notable songs as "Dancing in the Dark", "You and The Night and The Music", "That's Entertainment" and "By Myself." I have sent many letters to Jonathan about playing more Bing. He will usually play at least one Crosby track every two or three programs. It must be noted that Jonathan is one of the leading experts on Frank Sinatra. Sinatra is his main man. He always plays a late-hour of Frank

on every program. Never the less, Jonathan promised to always play Bing after his death.

Well, on July 25th, between 2pm and 2.30, he played nine straight records of Bing duetting with other people. Schwartz stated that Bing was at his best with others. He has said in the past that Bing was extraordinary singing in harmony.

He started the program with "Road to Morocco" with Bob Hope. The next one was "A Couple of Song and Dance Men" with Fred Astaire. However, he played the cut from the movie where, obviously, you couldn't see Bing doing all the impressions – he should have played the studio record. Next, he played "You're Just in Love" with Clooney, then "Gone Fishing" with Armstrong, next, "Mr Crosby, Mr Mercer," then "The Waiter, the Porter and the Upstairs Maid".

Then he played what he said was his favorite, "Bob White," with Boswell. I love this record myself. Schwartz said "what a record, listen to those people sing." Next was "Basin St. Blues" with Ella and finally, "Well Did You Evah," with you know who. Schwartz said, "acted and sang magnificently, bravo, gentlemen, bravo Crosby. What a joy it must have been to sing with Crosby. He had such generosity on records to his fellow performers. He was so warm spirited!"

Most of the Bing records Schwartz plays are from the 30s to 50s. I have told him he's missing a lot of excellent stuff from the 70s. Incidentally, Schwartz used to be on WNEW and WQEW. WNEW was the most famous AM station in NYC for playing the Great American Songbook for many years. Also, on that station was Jim Lowe. He used to do a 15 minute "Crosby Corner." I got friendly with Jim in the last few years as he tapes a program once a month that goes to over 25 stations in the U.S. and Canada. I got Jim to appear at a panel at Hofstra and also to record two whole programs on Bing, on of which Wig was able to pass on to quite a few members. Jim is a wonderful guy. He loves Crosby and had interviewed him when Jim worked at WNEW-AM. Jim tapes his present programs in Manhattan so I attend all the tapings.

I read every word of the last BING. Excellent and interesting as usual.

Graham Pascoe, Bathurst, New South Wales, Australia.

Congratulations to you and Wayne for another beaut issue of BING (137). Greg's article 'Bing in 2004' was especially interesting: fancy High Hefner being a Crosby fan. I wonder if he would have admitted to that during the halcyon days of *Playboy*? As a young man, I was a regular reader, for the excellent articles, not the centrefold photos, of course. As for *Here Comes The Groom*, that's one of my favourite Crosby movies.

I believe the first Gold records in Australia were not nominated until the late 1940s or 1950s. The criteria were sales of 50,000 for singles and 25,000 for LPs. On that basis, Bing's Gold 78s would have been the following Deccas:

Y5871 'Silent Night, Holy Night' / Adeste Fideles
Y6118 'The Small One' parts 1 & 4
Y6119 'The Small One' parts 2 & 3
Y6121 'Galway Bay/My Girl's an Irish Girl
Y6341 'Gone Fishin" / A Kiss To Build A Dream On'
(Louis Armstrong)

Yes, it's a short list but that reflected the state of the industry for most of the time when Bing was 'top of the pops'.

You probably know that David Currington and Lachlan McLean arranged a meeting of a few Crosby fans at Lachlan's home in Sydney recently. John Dever was there and kindly lent me some copies of a 1940s music magazine, *Syncopation*, published in Sydney. There were, inevitably, references to Bing and I'll be able to make use of them in my book. One column claimed that Jim Hoyl, one of the composers of 'When You Make Love To Me', was a pseudonym for Jascha Heifetz. Is that so?

(Editor: Graham certainly does some original research in Australia on Bing's impact there. With a population of about 7 million in the 1940s, record sales were inevitably in low figures but at least we know that Bing was the biggest of them all there. Surprising that Decca Y5788 (White Christmas) did not earn a Gold record but it appears that it sold only 43,097 copies up to 1957. Fascinating to see how popular 'The Small One' was though.

Jim Hoyl was indeed Jascha Heifetz's pseudonym. Don't blame him for keeping quiet about the song in question! Fred Reynolds didn't think much of it either in his 'The Crosby Collection' book.)

Stan White, Rothwell, Kettering, Northamptonshire, UK

It was sad to read in the Summer 2004 edition that Hal Shaper, the songwriter has died; it was about 5 years ago that Alan Fisher put the word out that Harry Crosby wanted to make contact with Hal, recalling that Mr Shaper was very good to him in his younger days. Eventually, with the help of various people at the BBC, we were able to trace Hal in South Africa, and Alan assured me that Harry did then make contact with him.

Depending on a person's own viewpoint, Norman Wolfe is correct in saying that in various ways, Bing's performance of songs in the films was often better than his commercial recordings. Much the same has been said many times about the songs he sang on radio, simply because Bing and Trotter had the freedom to choose the best arrangements. Nevertheless Bing always said that Jack Kapp made his recording career the success that it was, this being done within the framework of the recording policy at the time, and what the record buying public wanted. Bing's Brunswick records sold very well in the UK, even though they were nearly double the price of the English Decca label.

After many, many years, the Sunday afternoon Bing spot on BBC Radio 2 has come to an end because Desmond Carrington has been moved to a Tuesday evening slot, with the programme cut from 2 hours to 1 hour. Alan Dell started the "Crosby Corner" on Sunday afternoons way back in the 1980s and when he passed away, David Jacobs kept it going with Desmond taking it up when David moved to another slot. Desmond is on BBC Radio 2 on Tuesdays at 7 to 8pm, and of course includes Bing when possible. The broadcast can also be heard over the Internet (www.bbc.co.uk/radio2).

Just to mention my letter in the last edition about Bing's first record, and Malcolm's (Editor) comment at the end, it is just worth mentioning that there is a Slow Fox-trot, a Fox-trot, and a fast Fox-trot. Even slowed down so that the voices sound correct, "I've Got The Girl" is at Fast Fox-trot tempo.

Several mentions have been made of Ken Crossland's book about Mike Holliday, "The Man Who Would Be Bing" Ken was interviewed many times on radio about this book, and the CD set issued to go with it. I have heard several of these programmes, and I have to say that apart from Russell Davies on Radio 2, the programmes on BBC local radio with Anna Murby on BBC Northampton, and Mike Carey on BBC Derby, were probably the best. Incidentally Mike Carey features Bing often.

A thing that has always puzzled me is why the compilers of the books which list Bing's record releases have always left out those that were released on reel to reel tape (which was quite a lot), 8-track cartridges, with dozens more on cassette. They are legitimate releases, and from what I have been reading, will hold the recordings in good condition better than some CDs.

(Editor: I do have a copy of a "Bing Crosby Cassette Catalogue" put out by our recently departed and much lamented Colin Pugh in June 1987 which includes an Australian Supplement by Ron Daniels. However, I am not aware of any listing of reel to reel or 8-track releases. Not sure who could produce this now, probably only the 'legendary' collectors such as Ken Gray, Jack Souther, Gordon Wall, Ralph Harding etc.)

Talking Jazz - with Joe Bushkin

The death of Joe Bushkin in November came as we went to press and was a particularly sad loss. By coincidence, David Currington had recently sent us a fascinating extract which we had already intended to use in this edition and this now becomes Joe's obituary.

John Dever has made a copy of a segment from a 1987 book by the late British author Max Jones called *Talking Jazz*. A number of jazz artists are interviewed including Joe Bushkin, whose segment begins with nine pages following his earlier career, but culminates in a segment on Bing as follows.

"This whole thing started with that Christmas TV show with Bing Crosby and Fred Astaire. It was one afternoon in the studio when things got a little out of control. There was some problem about lighting and we weren't getting too many takes in. It was a big set and there was a lot of running about in an attempt to get this show on the road, and the whole thing began to remind me of Groucho Marx," Joe remembered.

"It was a tremendous comedy except that a fortune was being wasted for Bing's company while a couple of jerks were trying to change a baby spot into a pin spot, or whatever the hell it was. There was a lot of technical dialogue and not much action going on. I was getting tired of standing around. I'd drunk about thirty cups of coffee and was getting a little acidity problem, and I figured the best way for me to waste some more time was to just go up and play some piano. Where I had to play was supposedly in Bing's music room at his home. There were steps up to the piano and back of it a library of records and tape machines and so forth. That was the scene. So I sat down and started to play *Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams.*

I don't know why I went into that, but subconsciously I did it in a key where it lay well for him. He sings it around C, D flat or something. Bing was at the back getting a cup of tea, and he came walking up with this paper cup of tea in his hand and stood by the piano. I was into the middle part of the tune and he starts singing, and all the noise stopped in the studio because he was just singing softly, you know, with the piano. So I went from *Wrap Your Troubles to I Surrender, Dear,* and a bunch of tunes like *Please,* that he dug, and he went on singing. And, next thing you know, his wife, Kathryn, and the kids came over and sat on the steps. The studio men got the lights straight, and now they're ready to shoot the scene, and Bing is going to keep the medley going. Now he's throwing tunes at me.

And while I'm playing piano during this lighting panic, Bing asks me if I'd like to bring a quartet up to the Pebble Beach Pro-Am, which is the biggest golf tournament in the United States. He said he hadn't sung a tune at his own Pro-Am Celebrity Tournament in eight years. He'd get up and talk, and so on, but apparently hadn't sung a song at his own thing in all that time. And this year (1975) he was going to do a medley of thirty-five tunes. And that was the whole show. We opened with a number, and Bing got up and sang about thirty songs, which absolutely clobbered 800 of these great golfers. Fractured 'em. Then Bing said we had to do a concert with this thing, you know. So we got the family together, because they had the material from the various shows that they did; the orchestrations were already written, practically, and he got Nelson Riddle, Rosemary Clooney, and my quartet with Herb Ellis on guitar. And we had a show.

Joe Bushkin and Bing arrive in Norway.

And I must say this: with the music I love playing, I'll do it for nothing or get paid. With Bing I'm getting paid and I really enjoy being with the guy. It's a kick, and everything has been first class."

Bushkin, as I have tried to imply, feels an almost unlimited admiration for Crosby, whose skill and professionalism and sheer enthusiasm for music he finds stimulating and endearing. Bing, I noted on the last Palladium visit, occasionally looked surprised or amused at what Bushkin (or maybe Johnny Smith) was playing during the medley.

"Well, yeah, right. We used to change it every show, and we threw him a couple of times. But he loved it. He said: 'Throw some curves.' He's like Babe Ruth, man; he loves a fast ball or a curve or something unexpected. Bing is absolutely one of the guys in the band, like any guy doing a solo. He's no different than Bunny Berigan was playing solo trumpet. Consequently I enjoy every minute of it, and I'm sure he does. He'll go anywhere in the world with this quartet. In fact, what's come up is to just go out with the quartet. It's such an easy thing. We can travel in two cars; all we need is a van for the amplifier and the drum set. And Bing would love to be in the same automobile as the quartet, so we could be talking about jazz musicians and old times. When I did that Christmas show with him and Fred Astaire, that was the Bing Crosby Projects, his company, that's paying for it. Yet he was hanging up shooting in order to ask me about the guys. He asked me about Bobby Hackett, when I saw him last, and so forth, and we talked about all the cats he knew. That's his thing, you know. He reminisced a lot about Jack Teagarden, of course, and Condon. He loved Eddie Condon."

I said Bing had always been a singer who appreciated superior jazzmen, players such as Louis Armstrong, Eddie Lang, Joe Sullivan, and the Dorseys, and loved working with groups like Bob Crosby's Bob Cats. Joe put it to me that Bing just preferred good musicians, a preference which should not surprise us.

"He always asked for us on the record dates when we were session men, and that's natural, isn't it? I mean, if you have a choice of hanging out with Broadway Rose or Sophia Loren I think you're going to take Sophia."

I wondered when and how the Crosby-Bushkin association began, and Joe said that the Crosby connection went way back to when he recorded with the singer. "I made a lot of records with him. I did recordings with him when I was with Tommy Dorsey's band in '40 and '41, and then when I was a studio piano player after the war — you know, I was staff pianist in early 1946 — Bing called in and he got Eddie Condon, Bud Freeman, George Wettling and myself, and a bunch of guys he specified for a record date at Decca. He did *Personality* with me and some other tunes. And I played piano for Bing as far back as 1940 on the *Road To Morocco* [sic - it was *Zanzibar*] soundtrack. That's when Dorsey's band was on the West Coast, and we played at the Palladium in Hollywood. Bing wanted Tommy's band to be on the main title track of the picture, which had Victor Young's orchestra, so it was really quite a scene. This was an immense studio with a big symphony orchestra, Victor Young's, and the Tommy Dorsey band, and man there were some sounds going on. Anyway, Bing dug my playing. He picked up on it right away; I guess it reminded him of whatever piano playing he liked to hear. So I got to know him real well around that time."

All the above was extracted from *Talking Jazz* by John Dever to whom I send my grateful thanks.

David Currington

(Editor: Joe Bushkin was of course a major player in Bing's Palladium concerts and one lady who saw all the shows in 1976 and 1977 was Pat Forster. After the 1976 concerts, Pat met Bing on Sunningdale Golf Course and she told him that she had seen every one of his performances to which Bing looked astonished and replied "My dear, you ought to get your money back!"

Pat's recollections of the 1977 shows were reproduced in BING magazine #85 in September 1987 to coincide with the tenth anniversary of the concerts and they made fascinating reading. We have great pleasure in reprinting her article with grateful thanks to Pat for her diligence in making the notes on these final concerts by Bing.)

IMPRESSIONS OF THE LONDON PALLADIUM CONCERTS - 1977

I attended every concert at the Palladium in 1977, as I had done in 1976, and on my return home every night I jotted down my impressions of the evening, less than an hour after I had left the theatre. Exactly ten years afterwards, I now offer the exact transcription of those notes as I wrote them at the time.

FIRST MONDAY Completely full house - spoke to couple from Paris who could not get in last year - standing ovation when Bing came on - seemed not in full control - he missed line about "gear and hair" - went straight into medley at the end without solo songs and back-drop curtain and finished quickly - seemed tired and not master of the situation. Standing ovation at the end.

TUESDAY Completely full house - all boxes and standing room. Ticket touts out in force. Standing ovation when Bing came on - 6 VIPs in front of me - one said how moving it had been - Bing in splendid form - got all lines right about "gear and hair" correct - gave whispered instructions to Kathy to relay to conductor - danced around much more tonight - seemed in absolutely top form - lost the words of 'It's Been a Long, Long Time' but got back there to much laughter from audience - tremendous standing ovation at the end.

WEDNESDAY Frank Bough televised walking down to his seat in the stalls - another standing ovation when Bing came on - completely full house again - ticket touts

again out in force - Bing muffed his lines in 'Pennies From Heaven' - and he and Joe Bushkin convulsed with laughter. Bing said the cornet playing had put him off - tremendous reception by the audience to this by-play - Bing was still smiling to himself in the next song - 'Sweet Leilani'.

THURSDAY Standing ovation when Bing came on - fluffed first opening note - not so agile - seemed to be in much pain, did not joke or dance about - came to an abrupt stop in early part of last medley, forgetting the next song and was not near enough the piano to read his list - started wrong song later and sang "I'm in the wrong key" and said to us "I forget things at my age; you spend all day trying to remember and all night going to the bathroom." Standing ovation but Bing was obviously in pain and sat on his stool in medley several times. Announced that programmes left at box-office with name and address would be signed.

FRIDAY A wonderful night - completely full house, audience 'buzzing' with life before curtain went up - tremendous reception when Bing came on, cheering and clapping and programme-waving - he was back on form again - more agile and happy tonight - did not 'fluff' once - only sat on stool once in medley while singing 'White Christmas' - ovation at the end tremendous, everyone standing and cheering - he took many solo curtain-calls with people calling out "Well done, Bing" and waving to him - the noise was terrific - I spoke to a nice American couple who had been last year and envied me coming every night - Bing congratulated us on singing part of 'Blue Skies' and said we should come to Brighton with him.

SATURDAY Another completely full house - Bing seemed very tired and was not getting his notes clear sometimes - he did not make his usual welcome speech at beginning - he did not leave the stage when Harry sang solo but sat on stool besides piano, waved up to the spotlight man to move off him so he sat in darkness hut I could see his foot beating time still - started wrong note in medley - recovered himself but did not joke or ad-lib - sat on stool more during the medley - standing ovation at the end hut Bing looked very tired and cut short the-curtain-calls.

SECOND MONDAY House full again to capacity - I sat next to Vera Lynn and her husband, saw Roland Culver in the audience - saw Kathy drive in by herself at stage-door - doorman told us Bing and Harry had arrived earlier for a rehearsal - Bing back on form again - a drunk interrupted him at the end of 'There's Nothing That I Haven't Sung About' asking him to sing it again - Bing laughed and said he could not remember all that a second time while the drunk was man-handled out by attendants. Bing stayed on stage again while Harry sang solo, saying he would stay as it was a furlong and a half to the wings - in the medley he got the words mixed up in 'San Fernando Valley' and sang "come back again

tomorrow night and I'll get them right." A bouquet was thrown onto the stage at the end of Rosemary Clooney's songs - Bing brought her back on stage, picked it up and pretended to keep it with a grin then presented it to her with a courtly bow, but bending obviously pained him - then after Kathy had sang with him and she had just left another bouquet was thrown up onto the stage - Bing walked back right across the stage to pick it up with the words "This is for you." Tremendous standing ovation at the end - several solo curtain calls.

TUESDAY A wonderful, magic, evening - house full to capacity and buzzing with excitement - ticket touts out in force - I heard tickets being sold at £25 - £50 a time - Bing in most lively form yet - laughing and doing dance steps, looking so happy while singing - tremendous ovation after each song especially during the medley - he sat on stage again while Harry sang solo saying again it was a furlong to get to the wings - he made Kathy laugh heartily at one aside while they were singing together - in tremendous voice in 'Sweet Leilani' - he sounded as in 1937! He did not forget any lines - tremendous standing ovation at the end and took six solo curtain calls, doing little dance steps, including his '"Egyptian" one - did his tippity-toe walk every time he went off during the whole evening - has been in obviously very fine condition, both physically and in voice - the applause at the end of 'White Christmas' was so great he had to laugh.

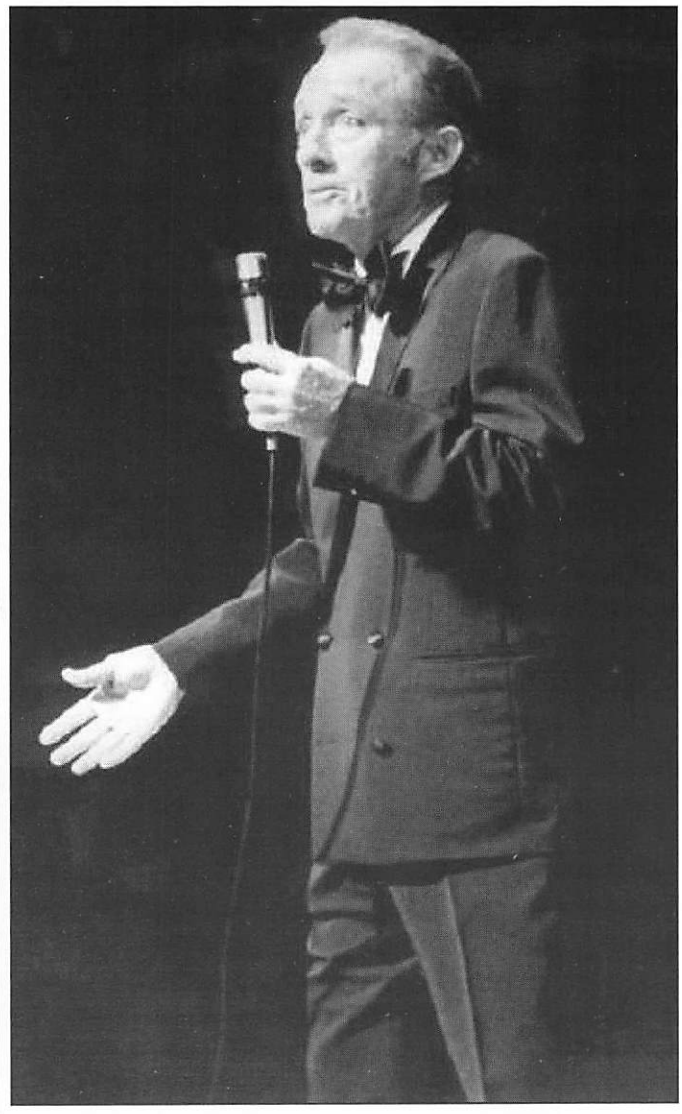
WEDNESDAY Another packed house. Harry got a big reception for his solo and Bing said he must have a clique of fans out there - Bing in fine form - very fit doing dance steps and beautiful hand movements - held Kathy's hand tightly in duet. Tremendous standing ovation again at the end - he seemed very happy and free from pain all the evening.

THURSDAY Another wonderful, magical evening - ticket touts out in force asking to buy spare tickets as cars drove up - another full house buzzing with life and excitement - Bing got a tremendous ovation when he came on - he seemed very happy and lively. Kathryn was so convulsed with laughter once at something he said that he said to her "be careful, you'll fall apart soon!" He joked with Harry and us, and danced about a lot - he had a handkerchief out a lot while he was sitting listening to Harry and he sounded sometimes as if he had a cold, especially on the low notes. When Kathy came on for 'True Love' she brought him a steaming cup and saucer - he looked surprised but put it down on the stool and went on singing - at the finish of the song he asked her "What's that?"

Kathy said "A cup of tea."

"Tea!" Bing said, "what the hell do I want a cup of tea for? That won't help me, I need something stronger!" Kathy laughed, shrugged her shoulders at us and took the cup and saucer off stage. Bing said to us "She brings me tea!" He called after her "Bring it back with something in it!" He then hesitated as to which song came next and Joe Bushkin said 'South of the Border' - Bing held up his list and said "I lost my place on this piece of paper - everyone laughed and clapped - while he was singing 'Pennies From Heaven' Kathryn came back with the cup and saucer - Bing took it, smelled it, and handed it back to her. She shrugged her shoulders and took it away again. Bing called after her something about it smelling of aniseed - Joe offered him a pill from a small box, laughing. I think Bing really has a head-cold but he carried on with the medley and joked with Kathy when she came back for 'In A Little Spanish Town' (no cup this time!).

A tremendous ovation at the end, with everyone standing and cheering, and the rest of the cast were leaving him and smiling at him also. He did his "Egyptian" walk and asked us to applaud the band as "the best in London." 'Mr.' Vera Lynn sat next to me on his own tonight.



FRIDAY Another wonderful, magical, evening. One ticket tout spoke to me and said I had been every night and that I "must love Bing". Another full house buzzing with excitement - John Conteh, the boxer, sat in front of me and Princess Margaret and her entourage were about four rows behind me. Some opera 'buffs' were sitting behind me and said they had seats for Glyndbourne that

night but turned them down so they could see Bing Crosby as it was a "once in a lifetime chance." Tremendous ovation when Bing came on - audience very receptive - he was in good form, dancing and smiling happily - he looked radiant at the reception he got - the only 'fluff of the evening was in 'Mad Dogs and Englishmen' when he forgot the words. He tried to ad-lib but then stopped and said we deserved to have it correct, so he would start again. The conductor did not hear him say this and went on playing so Kathryn went up to Gordon Rose and got him to stop playing and start again - Bing got it right this time - and got a tremendous cheer and acclaim, more than on those evenings when he had got it right first time!

Bing again sat on his stool during Harry's solo, but asked Harry if he minded him staying? Harry said "It's your stage - you can do what you like - you have top-billing Dad!" The songs in the medley got a tremendous reception, especially 'Basin St. Blues' and 'White Christmas', the ovations for them were terrific - he had to wait several minutes to continue - usual standing ovation at the end when he came on alone - he was in fine form and did all his famous mannerisms - "tightrope walk" to the front of the stage, then his "Egyptian" walk going off stage - the audience was one of the most warm and receptive towards him of the whole tour - they obviously loved and admired him and I am sure he "got the message" - kept thanking us and blowing kisses. After the Noel Coward medley, while taking the interval curtain he had looked rueful and almost woe-begone. I think he thought he had let us down by fluffing a spot song, not just a medley one, but the reception he got at the end must have cheered him. There has been no sign that he was in pain all this second week - most of the people around me that I spoke to either could not get tickets last year or have come again this year.

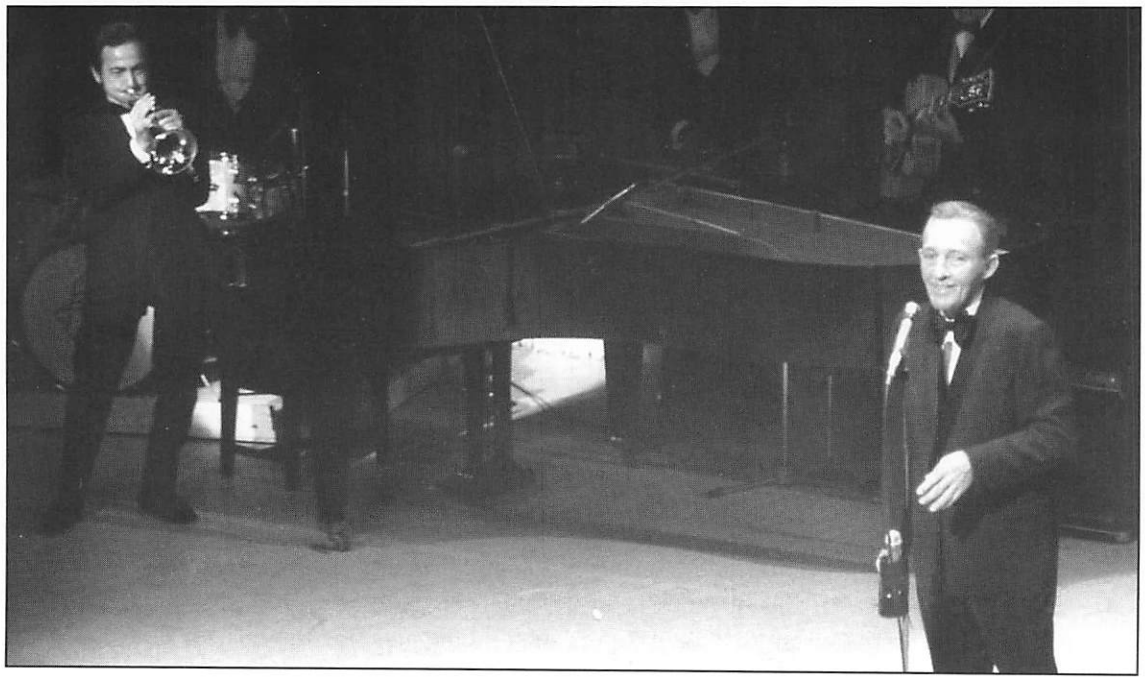
SATURDAY: THE LAST NIGHT - no words can adequately describe this wonderful evening - audience full to capacity and many celebrities - Bernard Braden, Barbara Kelly, Henry Cooper I noticed - the ovation Bing got when he came on was thunderous and overwhelming - people shouting 'Good old Bing' and waving programmes - no 'fluffs' tonight - he was in superb form, laughing and dancing, and obviously enjoying himself and free from pain - rapturous applause at the end of each song, and especially the first half. A great welcome when he was seen on stage at the beginning of the second half - applause was again rapturous for each song - during the medley they cheered to the echo especially 'Basin St. Blues' and 'Million Dollar Baby' - he could not continue for some while after these. After 'White Christmas' the cheering went on for some minutes - at the end of the medley the audience just went mad, an ovation of nearly five minutes - he could not speak - they just would not stop cheering - in the end he sang a few more bars of 'Ol' Man River' just to get them quiet. Bing then thanked everyone for being such marvellous audiences for the two weeks and said how much he had enjoyed being here — he loved us, London, and the Palladium - then the standing ovation was unbelievable; flowers were thrown down from the boxes - people had run down the aisles and were packed round the stage when he came on for solo curtain-calls - everyone just went wild - I have never seen or heard anything like it in a theatre before.

Comments I heard as we finally left were:

A young boy attendant at the entrance was telling people it was the best show ever put on at the Palladium.

A group of men - one said to the others he could hardly speak the show had been so overwhelmingly magnificent and emotional. Another said Bing could sing any type of song; there was only one Bing - there will never be the like of him again - never anyone to beat him.....

Pat Forster



BING ON THE BOX

If by *The Box* we mean television, this column is gradually becoming hard pressed to find very much worth reporting insofar as the United Kingdom is concerned. By the inclusion of the wireless, yes, Bing does still receive quite a bit of recognition and air time. But though many of us scan the weekly TV schedules magazines looking for the increasingly elusive Crosby movie, we are almost always disappointed: though as will become apparent later there are exceptions. On the rare occasion that one does surface it is usually screened either at a time when we are at work or asleep! Thank goodness for video recorders, though I dare say most of us have the popular films anyway.

One such was screened to commemorate the death of Hollywood director Frank Capra who died on the 3rd September 1991. Sky Cinema 1, on this date this year, showed four of his most famous movies. The 1934 ground breaking Clark Gable-Claudette Colbert romantic comedy *It Happened One Night*; the 1939 political drama, starring James Stewart, *Mr. Smith Goes To Washington*; the all-time Christmas classic *It's A Wonderful Life*, again starring James Stewart, and the Bing and Jane Wyman 1951 musically romantic drama *Here Comes The Groom*, reviewed in this column in issue No. 135. The only other Capra movie starring Bing was *Riding High*, a virtual re-make of the director's 1934 equine story, *Broadway Bill*. Capra is quoted as saying:

> 'I made some mistakes in drama. I thought drama was when actors cried. But drama is when the audience cries.'

Wonderful Life and *Riding High* certainly had eye-moistening scenes but no tears in the tuneful *Here Comes The Groom*, unless you feel obliged to succumb to Anna Maria Alberghetti singing "Cara Nome" as a blind girl in an orphanage!

Although the aforementioned movies are the only two Crosby vehicles which reached the screen, Frank Capra is mentioned in Fred Reynolds' *The Road To Hollywood* as the proposed director of a couple of other Crosby movies that never came to fruition.

IT'S MAGIC

TCM in the UK have remained true to form with a regular outing for HIGH SOCIETY, while Sky Movies also featured ROBIN AND THE 7 HOODS. A decent role for our strictly honorary member of The Clan over whom he shines in *Style* and by winning the girl in the final fade out.

Wednesday 14th July at 1 p.m. on the E! Entertainment Channel (Sky Channel 193) was the place to be if you really wanted the low down on *Mysteries and Scandals - Bing Crosby*. 'Beloved crooner Bing Crosby battles alcohol addiction and his own violent outbursts'. Though I accept that some people may want a look at the personality behind the voice, which often

Clarence Muse and Bing discuss tactics in Riding High

can be can be quite interesting, I'm inclined to ask if all this garbage is really necessary? Personally, I gave it a miss. The reviews in BING #121 were more than enough.

Much more encouraging events, though, occurred around the twenty-seventh anniversary of Bing's death. Always a melancholy time to reflect upon, it does have some compensation by the remembrance of his life's work on the audio and visual media. In the U.K. the Performance Channel screened *The Magic Of Bing Crosby* three times each day on the 12th and 18th October. Most of us will have seen or own a copy of this enjoyable hour long programme narrated by Rosemary Clooney, Michael Feinstein and Kathryn Crosby. Apart from a few film clips from the Sennett era, it is all musical excerpts from television and is completely devoid of any 'man behind the image' tarnishment.

On the actual anniversary itself, Sky Cinema screened three consecutive Bing films! *Here Comes The Groom*, *Holiday Inn* and the 1956 version of *Anything Goes*. Again there was a duplication with all three films being shown twice. Quite a film-fest: nine hours of Croz can't be bad! Letters of appreciation to the responsible parties at SKY for this rare event have been sent; but if you feel like putting pen to paper for more of the same this is the way to achieve it. If you don't ask you don't get!

MEANWHILE....

Across the Pond *The Flip Wilson Show* of January 1971, on which Bing guested, was screened at 1pm Saturday 3rd July [and again on the 10th July] on the TV Land channel. The following day Flip's March 1972 programme, again with Bing, was featured at 10.30 a.m., both of these being Eastern Daylight Time.

Bing and Flip Wilson on the 1972 show.

As on previous screenings, all of Bing's solo numbers were omitted! Fortunately, the hilarious Bunny Club Sketch was, at least, included. *The Chronological Bing Crosby On Television* book tells us that during the show Flip presented Bing with a platinum disc to mark record sales of more than 300 million but this spot was axed also. To curtail a programme in such a way that the principal guest is partially excluded becomes a travesty and could only be described as Bing once more being deliberately sidelined. We do have some of Bing's participation on LPs; The Bunny Club Sketch on the Flip Wilson album, *Geraldine Don't Fight The Feeling*, and three medley numbers on the Limited Edition JGB 1007 B.C. - T.V. one of the late Johnny Joyce's babies.

Steven Lewis advised us that Bing showed up twice in the October 19th PBS-tv presentation *Broadway - The American Musical*. Nearly the entire recording of Bing's "Brother Can You Spare a Dime" was included with commentary about the song serving as the pre-eminent Depression anthem. One commentator claimed that some radio stations banned the song because of its lyrics. The second sighting may have been one that only the true Crosby scholar would have spotted. A scene from Bing's 1936 movie "Anything Goes" featured a singing Ethel Merman, with Bing disguised by a face full of fake whiskers.

Well worth hearing was *Bing 101*, a six hour chronological re-play of Bing's best and greatest hits on XM Satellite Radio's 1940s channel via www.xmradio.com which went out on Saturday the 7th August at 4 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time and 1 p.m. Pacific Time. Being satellite this station can be picked up on your computer - if you have one! Wig gave us full details of this great tribute in the last issue of course.

YOU AIN'T HEARD NOTHING YET!

Chuck Shaden's *Those Were The Days* program, heard every Saturday from 1pm - 5pm (Central Standard Time) on Chicago's WDCB 90.9 FM devoted his entire show each week in August to Al Jolson. Chuck featured a cross section of Jolson's radio work, via his own series as well as numerous guest appearances on other shows, which obviously included Bing as the following dates show.

August 7th Philco Radio Time Jan. 15, 1947
August 14th Philco Radio Time May 7, 1947
August 21st Philco Radio Time March 5, 1947

You could have heard four hours of Jolson on radio circa 1938-50 each Saturday in August by listening to the live streaming webcast on www.wdcb.org/.

Our friend Judy Schmid of Syracuse, NY, had two hours as guest DJ on her local "Music of Your Life" station playing cuts from Ken Barnes' "Swingin' with Bing" and then "Bing with a Beat" to promote two new CDs featuring our man. A local director of the 'cinephile' society called in to mention they would be playing Bing films over the winter, "as they are the ones that draw the largest crowds."

WMKV-FM of Cincinnati, Ohio regularly presents "Bing Crosby and Friends" hosted by Mark Magistrelli. Mark's interesting perspective on the music of Bing Crosby airs on Mondays and Wednesdays at 5:00 pm. (EST). Mark feels that 'in addition to being a genuine

innovator, Bing Crosby may have been the single most versatile male singer in all of classic pop, working easily and effectively in almost every possible genre. Unfortunately, much of his most significant work is seldom heard on radio - so I thought we should try to correct that situation.' WMKV is the USA's first FM educational public radio station to be licensed to a retirement community, namely Maple Knoll Village, one of the nation's top-rated retirement communities. The broadcasts can be heard on the Internet at http://wmkvfm.org/listen.htm

MOVIE TIME U.S.A.

In the U.S.A. TV screenings of films have been far more frequent than the U.K. offerings, thanks mainly to the TCM channel. Here is what you had the opportunity to view especially as each was screened more than once. But what happened to RIO?

Let's Make Love	Fox Movie Channel
Road to Bali	Turner Classic Movies
The Road to Hong Kong	Turner Classic Movies
Road to Singapore	Turner Classic Movies
Road to Utopia	Turner Classic Movies
Road to Zanzibar	Turner Classic Movies
Road to Morocco	Turner Classic Movies
My Favorite Blonde	Turner Classic Movies
Going Hollywood	Turner Classic Movies
High Society	Turner Classic Movies
Holiday Inn	Turner Classic Movies
That's Entertainment!	Turner Classic Movies
Stagecoach	AMC

UK RADIO ROUND UP

We can now get *Gold For Grown Ups* on the Internet as the following email from Paul Barnes advises us:

> 'Thought you and the world-wide brotherhood of Bingophiles might like to know that one of the seven BBC stations broadcasting my show is now streamed on the Internet. To gain access simply tap into www.bbc.co.uk/threecounties which brings up the home page. Then click on the online service on the right of the screen [Listen Live]. It may be necessary to download RealPlayer, a bit of free software. The show is broadcast on Sundays between 21.00 and midnight (UK time, of course - and subject to change when we move to GMT in the autumn). Tell your friends. Tell the world! It would be wonderful to get e-mail responses from far-flung listeners: paul.barnes@bbc.co.uk will find me.'

So, all you overseas readers, how about 'tuning in' and letting Paul know you are enjoying his very likeable programme. Paul recently came across a *Radio Times* dating from 1947. This was at a time when Bing was regularly featured in a fifteen minute programme on the BBC. The time and place in question being Friday 12th. September at 10.15 p.m. A track that may well have been played then is *A Gal In Calico*, one of our East Anglia presenter's favourites and one of two tracks featured on his programme: the other being *The Horse Told Me* written by Jimmy Van Heusen and Johnny Burke for the 1949 film *Riding High*, neither of those pieces of information available to Barnsey at the time of the broadcast. That film was released on DVD in the States at the end of August and is available from amazon.com for $20.02 postage paid to the U.K., which with the favourable rate of exchange right now works out at around £12. A nice package and a good print, too. Of course, your player must be able to handle Region 1 and NTSC which some do, or may be 're-chipped' to do so.

Barnsey went to town with the September calendar anniversary. The photograph described - Bing signing autographs at a Claridges press conference for those members who haven't purchased a copy [tsk, tsk!] - and the featured song, *A Nightingale Sang In Berkeley Square*, played. Two further gems followed; Bing joining forces with Major Glenn Miller on the 31st. August 1944 when Bing introduced a group within the band as 'one of the choice cuts within your organization; the sirloin of swing as it were.', for an up-tempo take of *Swinging On A Star*. Paul gave due credit to the song's multi-Oscar winning origin, once described by Jimmy Van Heusen as the ten commandments in a popular song as written by him and lyricist Johnny Burke. Interestingly, only a couple of days previously, as the ultimate accolade Radio 4's Brain Of Britain quiz show posed the question 'what film did *Swinging On A Star* song come from'. None of the contestants knew the answer!

Next up, to celebrate the birthday anniversary of Billy Rose, Bing's laid back rendition of *It's Only A Paper Moon*, from a Philco Radio Time broadcast. Rose was co-composer of this with Yip Harburg and Harold Arlen for the 1933 film *Take A Chance*.

SCOBEY-DOO

A new CD, popular with U.K. presenters has been the re-mastered Bluebird release of *Bing With A Beat*. So far none of them has picked up on the superior take of *Exactly Like You*, as described by Ken Crossland in the last issue of this magazine. Russell Davies did, however, advise his listeners that Bob Scobey's 'Frisco Jazz Band had been augmented with some of Bing's old jazz associates, notably Nick Fatool on drums for this 1957 session of vintage standards. 'By now Bing was singing for fun, not the hit parade' said Russell.

Harmony Night, the home of 'the best of Bing' requests in the South East of England, does occasionally come up with a surprise or two. *Miss Annabelle Lee* and *Three Little Words* have been a couple of tracks not normally associated with the less adventurous domain of *I'll Be Seeing You, You Are My Sunshine* and *If I Had My Way*. But if that's what their listeners want, then all praise to Bill and Angela Rennells on their Harmony Night for meeting the demand.

A couple of hundred miles north of the Rennells' patch we have a new boy on the block in the shape of Howard Leader of BBC Radio Lincolnshire. His 'Magical Memories' programme has so far produced two or three Whiteman era tracks featuring our man, and long may he continue.

HALL OF FAME

Two significant broadcasts took place in commemoration of the 14th October. Firstly, Ken Barnes was the guest on Eric Hall's 'Monster Memories', which

is a three hour programme broadcast on BBC Essex Radio every Sunday afternoon. Ken was interviewed in depth about his new "Swingin' With Bing 'The Lost Radio Performances' " 3-CD set from which three tracks were featured: *It's Magic*, from a 1948 Philco Radio Time broadcast; *Sam's Song*, a duet with Nat Cole, from a February 1951 Chesterfield Cigarettes programme, and *Basin Street Blues*; again from a Chesterfield show, this time November 1949. The quality of sound is exceptionally good and when I was up in HMV in London's Oxford street recently there it was in their import department - at a strictly import price! But I have to say the entire presentation looked very desirable.

Eric Hall's programme is a freewheeling type of show with lots of 'phone-ins relating to quizzes and callers' own opportunity to warble a track or two [take a bow, Wally Oldfield!]. Prior to playing Ken's newly released version of *Sam's Song,* listeners were asked to say with whom Bing originally recorded the track for the commercial release. Answers ranged from Ragtime Jimmy to Danny Kaye before Eric, with some exasperation, gave the final clue that it was a close relative of Bing who also had an uncle Bob! Fortunately for the credibility of East of England listeners that did the trick! Being an afternoon devoted to Bing and his music [though other artistes were featured on Crosby songs] there was ample opportunity to question Ken on his working relationship with Bing and, as always, he was very magnanimous regarding this saying that Bing was the easiest singer he ever worked with and how they were usually under budget because a track could be laid down in ten or fifteen minutes or less. Questioned about his musical tastes Ken came up with a very philosophical comment: 'I don't live in the past but I like to visit. You meet a better class of performer.'

Then Malcolm, our Editor, showed up on BBC Radio Kent (also heard on BBC Southern Counties) on the telephone on the Evening Show, Wednesday night 13th October about 8 p.m. The programme was somewhat fragmented by news and road traffic reports and Malcolm had only a limited opportunity to give an overview of Bing's career including his participation in the 'famous foursome' charity golf tournament at the Temple course, Maidenhead. Following the playing of *Moonlight Becomes You,* Malcolm explained how Bing really started it all and despite listener phone calls to say Matt Monro and Michael Holliday were home-grown crooners who were just as good, he countered by saying that Bing didn't just sing! Imagine the cult personality of a Tom Cruise who also dominated the record industry **and** hosted the most popular radio series for many years. Malcolm told of his meeting with Phillip Crosby, the first family son, who was keen to refute his brother Gary's oh so damaging book, and how Bing, 'a man of letters', always replied to his fans. All of which left the programme's presenter, Sue Dougan, asking 'Was there anything Bing wasn't good at?' 'I guess there must have been', mused Malcolm, clearly at a loss for specifics. Perhaps the closing song, *I've Got The World On A String*, said it for him

As most U.K. listeners will now know, Desmond Carrington's regular Sunday, two hour slot [a fixture since the year dot it seems] has been curtailed to just one hour on a Tuesday evening. A slap in the face from the BBC for all listeners to real music. In anticipating the final axing from his prime time, weekend programme he played Bing's [*I'm Heading For*] *The Last Round Up* later assuaged by the inherent lyric of *I Whistle A Happy Tune*. His Crosby spot has been a cornerstone of his 'All-Time Greats' and 'Say It With Music' programmes and it is unlikely that Bing will receive the same amount of exposure as before. As Desmond was to say on one of his last shows; 'There are many good things about life today, but some of us think we have lost more than we have gained.'

NOW YOU HAS JAZZ

On Monday 13th September a significant new six part series began on BBC Radio 2. Called *Jazz At The Movies* trumpeter and composer Guy Barker time travels through the history of the cinema to examine in words and music the extent to which jazz played its part on the soundtrack. Initially, sound was not a part of the celluloid track but on a separate disc which only a few picture houses were able to play. Consequently, many out-of-town theatres could show only a silent version of a film. Barker also drew attention to 'soundies'; sort of juke box movies. Put a nickel in the slot and watch a few minutes of, say, Fats Waller performing. Bing, as we well know, never featured in one such, but he was soon evident in the first programme in an excerpt of *Happy Feet* from the soundtrack of *King of Jazz*. Though the title of this film was something of a misnomer, Paul Whiteman was the 'mega-star' of his day long before the phrase was ever coined and eclipsed in popularity only by Charles Lindbergh. Direct reference to Bing, and The Rhythm Boys, was made before a bar or two of him crooning *Please* to the fated Eddie Lang's accompaniment. Early on black artistes did not appear on screen performing with white musicians or vocalists and much air time was given to their very gradual integration in this musically enhanced, hour long documentary. By way of illustrating that the process was finally complete the programme concluded with probably the most famous 'black and white' duet in the history of the cinema - *Now You Has Jazz.*

I am grateful to member Bill Wesley for drawing my attention to this programme barely a half hour before transmission.

Clare Teal, one of the present crop of acceptable 'chanteuse' and described by the Daily Mail as 'the new queen of swing', had a six part series on jazz on BBC Radio 2 in which she featured Bing and Louis with *Gone Fishing* and Bing and Rosie Clooney with *On A Slow Boat To China*. Clare, who appears from her comments to have a great liking for Bing, performed a track from her latest album on an October Parkinson show. If you spot her name in any future radio programmes she may be well worth a listen.

FINALLY

Browsing in Waterstones' book shop recently, I spotted a hefty volume entitled *1001 Movies To See Before You Die*. Although it is packed with many great films, each given considerable factual information and reason for

inclusion, sadly, *High Society* is the only Crosby picture that was felt worthy of inclusion apparently. I would have thought that at least one of the 'Road' movies, *King of Jazz*, *Holiday Inn* and *Going My Way* merited an entry. And on that bibliographical note these final jottings for the year come to a close. Happy Christmas!

Bert Bishop, 22nd October 2004

Swingin' With Bing! The Lost Radio Performances

The reaction to this new 3-CD set from Shout! Factory which we mentioned in our last issue has been nothing short of amazing. The ICC provided most of the photographs and documents used in the most impressive booklet which forms part of a superbly packaged product. There has been universal acclaim for this set and Jon Oye encapsulated this nicely in an e-mail to me.

I was hesitant to purchase the *Swingin' With Bing* set, since I already had most of the material on CD. But I'm glad my compulsive collector nature got the better of me, because it turns out this is one of the best and most attractive Bing packages ever assembled.

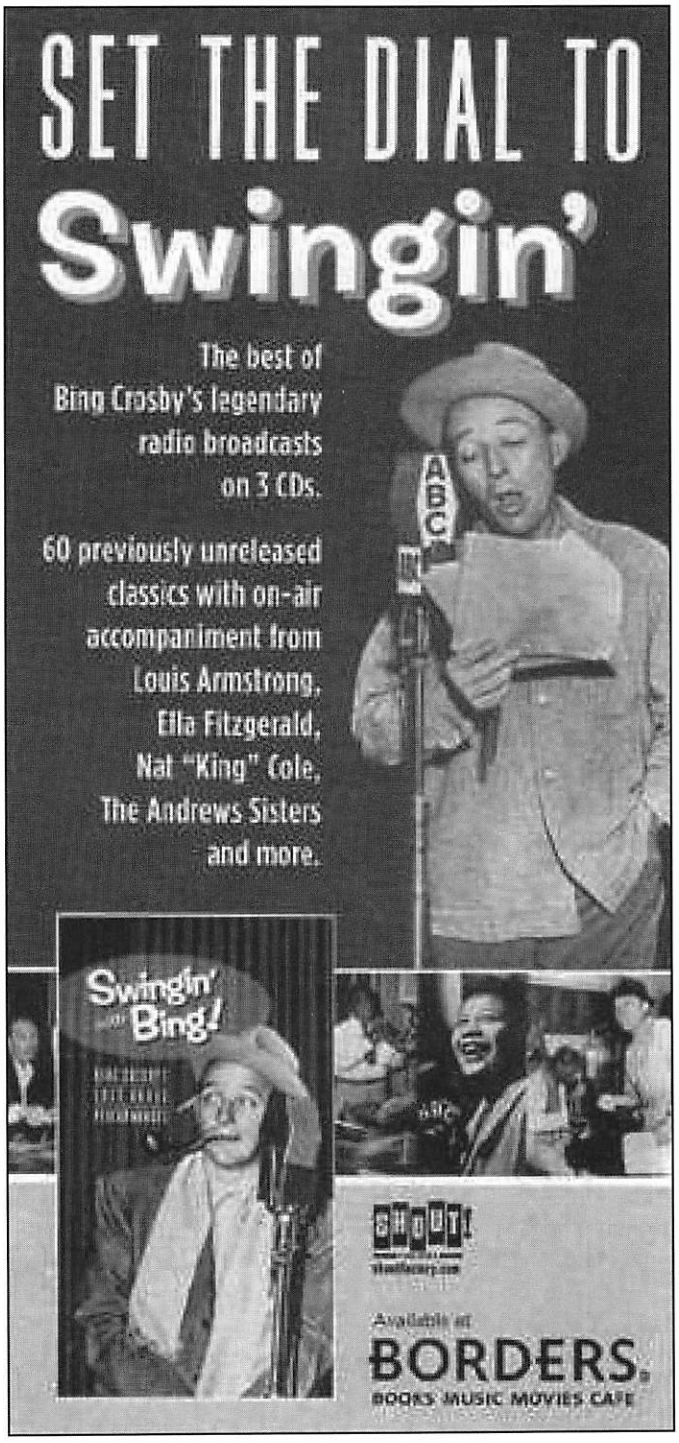
The booklet alone is a must-have. About the only CD-booklet to which it can be compared — *Bing - His Legendary Years* — is a distant second. This one is loaded with photos, many in color, as well as an insightful overview of Bing's career, a look at the restoration and transfer of the original transcription discs, and personal reflections about Bing from Ken.

It's great to hear these radio performances after state-of-the-art remastering, which obviously has made them sound much better than before - particularly the selections from the old Bing & Ella CD, and the "Fun With Bing & Louis" CDs. Something that's always bothered me about the latter — the annoying changes in speed from track to track, which alternately made Bing sound like everything from a low baritone to a low tenor — has thankfully been fixed.

An unique aspect of this set is that each disc has been edited to sound like one continuous performance, rather than fading in/fading out from one track to the next. This makes for a pleasant, consistent listening experience, rather than the cut-and-paste hodge podge effect that previous Bing radio compilations have produced.

Also nice to see that Mrs. Crosby was involved in the production of this package. I hope more of this type of worthy Bing product will follow. Thanks to everyone who made it possible, especially Ken Barnes!

Jon Oye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The best of Bing Crosby's legendary radio broadcasts on 3 CDs.
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BOOKS MUSIC MOVIES CAFE

Steven Lewis from the Bing Crosby Internet Museum had some thoughtful views:

The latest Ken Barnes' tribute to Bing *Swingin' With Bing* arrived in the mail today. My tobacco-stained hands were trembling as I ripped open the package to get to the contents. The album was hermetically sealed in nearly impenetrable plastic. I had to retrieve an X-Acto knife and do surgery. I popped open the album only to find an even more formidable task ahead of me — prying the CDs lose from the mother case. After prying, poking, squeezing and twisting I felt resigned to the fate of fracturing the CDs before their first spin on the light fantastic. I started cursing the engineering-school dropouts who designed CD holders and resolved that if I ever extracted these discs safely they would find a new home.

At last they gave up the struggle and the result was a pleasant 3 hours of Crosby and company in near perfect 1950

sound. The quality of the audio is comparable to the great GNP Crescendo series of a few years ago. The songs were welded together by laughter, applause and dialog to simulate an actual radio show, although the songs were actually taken from about a dozen different shows ranging from 1942 through 1953. There's nothing on the discs I hadn't heard before, but the majority of these songs I had never heard so clearly.

...The three discs are accompanied by a lavish booklet filled with photos and Ken's knowledgeable commentary, including a discussion of each song. Ken justifies the diverse selection and seamless stitching of songs by saying most of Bing's radio shows contained material that wouldn't entertain a modern audience. I agree, although some shows, like the 5-17-50 Chesterfield Show and the 4-2-47 Philco Show, entertain throughout — including the commercials.

My advice is to buy these discs. If you don't support the hard work that went into their production there won't be any more like them. **Steven Lewis**

Harvey Sheirr forwarded a very nice review of the set by David Hinckley of the *New York Daily News.*

3 CDs of recorded history - 'lost' Crosby is real find

In an age when it's a rare treat to hear a popular singer perform one or two songs live on the radio, we tend to forget that back in the day, they did it all the time. From Frank Sinatra to Hank Williams and Kate smith, many of the popular singers of the 20th century had weekly radio shows where they'd sing their hits and some unusual fillers. It's no surprise that Bing Crosby was among the most prolific of the lot, or that he was as good on the radio as he was in a recording studio. But don't take my word for it. As of Monday, you can pick up a three-CD box set called "Swingin' With Bing: Bing Crosby's Lost Radio Performances" (Shout Factory).

It's just plain delightful, folks. True, it's 73 tracks culled from some 4,000 broadcasts, but it's a good sampling, with straight songs, patter and guests like Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald, Nat King Cole and the Mills Brothers.....

On August 10, 1947, Bing and guests Gary Cooper and Peggy Lee recorded a show on tape. The quality was fine and the possibilities, it soon became clear, were endless. If a joke flopped, you just edited it out. Tape soon changed musical media, which was fine with Bing, who was so excited about its prospects he had bought himself a stake in the tape-recorder maker Ampex. No one begrudged him. Listening to "A Dreamer's Holiday" with Fitzgerald or a marvelous "Gone Fishin' " with Armstrong, it's clear he gave more than he got.

Also the Port Halcyon web site commented as follows:

Forget Howard Stern, Rush Limbaugh and all other pretenders...Bing Crosby was the most popular personality in radio history. In fact, in the mid-'40s a full one-third of all Americans tuned into hear Bing's weekly live radio program, which, besides boasting an unparalleled roster of stars and the genial Bing himself, sounded better than all other shows on the radio due to Bing's investment in the newfangled medium of tape (hence the superior sound on this set). Assembled by producer Ken Barnes with the assistance of Bing's widow Kathryn over a five-year period, the 57 performances begin, fittingly, with Crosby's career-defining rendition of 'Swinging on a Star' on the 'Kraft Music Hall' show in 1944, and include such dream finds for Crosby collectors as Bing's performance of 'It's Magic', his only version of the song ever released, and renditions of 'My Foolish Heart' and 'For You, For Me, Forever More'. Then there are the duets - 33 of them, including numerous tandems with Nat King Cole ('Sam's Song'), the Andrews Sisters ('Don't Fence Me In'), Ella Fitzgerald ('A Dreamer's Holiday'), Louis Armstrong ('Blueberry Hill'), Jack Teagarden ('Rockin' Chair') and other luminaries, plus instrumental accompaniment from the likes of Joe Venuti, Red Nichols and Les Paul.

Essential American pop culture.

John Bush of the All Music Guide posted the following on the Amazon site in Canada and also the same comments appeared in the recent World Records catalogue.

The public domain is well stocked with budget discs drawn from Bing Crosby's long radio career. Unfortunately, few are worth the plastic they're etched on, the usual problems including horrid sound quality and little in the way of documentation (regarding their origins) or context (regarding their relation to Crosby's career). Enter Shout! Factory to remedy the situation, hiring longtime enthusiast Ken Barnes — who produced several sessions during Crosby's recording renaissance of the mid-'70s — for the producer/compiler position and giving him free rein over the far-flung vaults of grubby transcription discs and tapes that comprise Crosby's radio career. The results, released as *Swingin' With Bing! Bing Crosby's Lost Radio Performances*, are splendid, offering clear proof of the opinion Bing Crosby fans have carried for decades: that transcriptions are a better source (or at least a more consistent one) to hear Crosby's swing smarts. Barnes paces the program with the touch and feel of an expert, selecting tracks from a wide range of time (a full decade of the postwar period) and tying them together with just a few interstices and crowd noise. (His instructions to audio restorer Peter Reynolds included "finding matching applause for the topping and tailing of each selection to give the feeling of a total production.") While the process may not be historically accurate, it makes for a wonderful program that delivers incredible performances and avoids the pitfalls of a usually exhausting 75-track box set.

Many of the highlights come on the first disc with looser versions of his hit standards "Swinging On a Star" and "Don't Fence Me In." The final two discs are devoted to duets — a staple of Crosby's show — and include performances with a succession of old friends: Ella Fitzgerald, Louis Armstrong, Jack Teagarden, Joe Venuti. Aside from the material, the set offers excellent fidelity and an overall sympathetic compilation to make the process of listening to a lengthy selection of Bing Crosby's non-studio sides smoother than it's ever been before.

Many of the web sites offering CDs encourage purchasers to review the products they have bought and naturally we Crosby people respond to the challenge. Jon Oye put his comments which we reproduced above on to the Amazon USA site and he was joined there by Greg Van Beek who said:

This is, without a doubt, the most comprehensive look at Bing Crosby's radio work that has ever been produced. And there was no better man to tackle the job of compiling it all than Ken Barnes. Ken's production values and attention to detail are extraordinary. If Ken's involved with a project, you can be assured the results will always be outstanding and top notch. It's a pity that Bing Crosby never made a commercial recording with the great Ella Fitzgerald, whom Bing cited on numerous occasions as his favorite singer. But we're fortunate Bing had her as a guest on his radio shows often, and that Ken has painstakingly assembled all of their extant duets together for this album. Not only that, but you also can revel in classic live performances pairing Bing with Nat King Cole, Louis Armstrong, the Andrews Sisters, the Mills Bros. and more. If you want to hear the ultimate crooner, live and in his prime, this is the one CD set with which to begin your journey into the realm of Crosbyana. A detailed and informative booklet is included with the set. It's heavily illustrated with many rare and previously unseen images. So go on, take a chance. Purchase this set at once. I guarantee you the magic of Bing will captivate you as it has so many others for so many years.

Nat King Cole swings with Bing.

Greg also posted the same comments on the CD Universe site.

Ken Barnes was interviewed by phone on the Syracuse University PBS radio station on September 23 and, as always, promoted Bing (and the new CD set) very effectively.

The set isn't cheap but it is a superb package which deserves to be part of most Crosby collections. Ken Barnes came to our Leeds meeting and talked about the set there as you will read.

Leeds, 2004

For the 39th. year in a row, Michael Crampton organised a Bing get-together in his hometown of Leeds in the UK. There was a change this year in that the meeting on Sunday, October 3 was held in a different location to the familiar Mansion Hotel in Roundhay Park which had been used since 1975. The place to be this year was Weetwood Hall and to say that the facilities were somewhat more modern was an understatement.

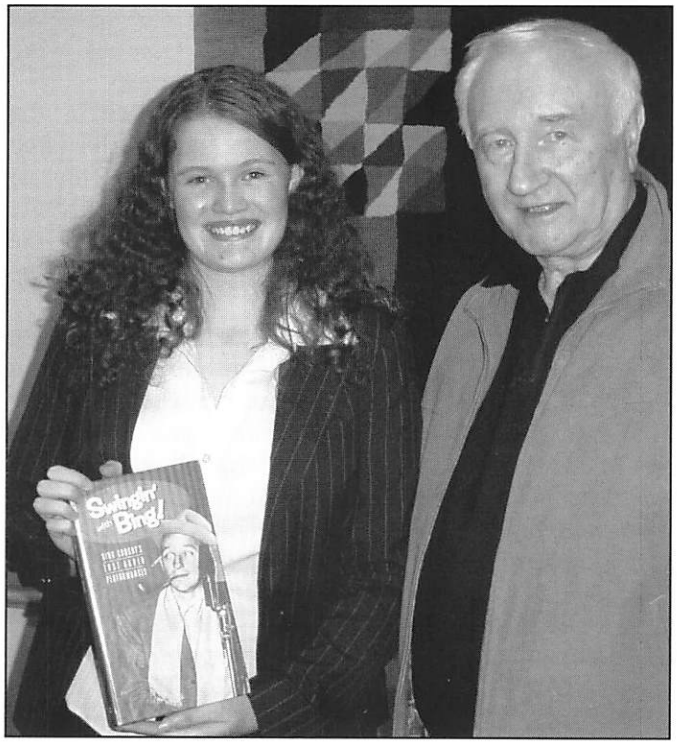
Using purpose-built conference facilities in the Bramley Room with built-in DVD projector and large wall-mounted screen, we were able to have clips of Bing's film songs running as the guests started arriving from 1:30 p.m. onwards. This also gave us time to fix the teething problems with the equipment before the meeting proper commenced.

As is his custom, Michael began the official proceedings at 3 p.m. welcoming an audience of just under 50 including eleven who were attending for the first time. It was a particular pleasure to greet one of our youngest members, 16-year-old Helen Rutherford who was there with her father. We stood for a few moment's silence in memory of our members who had passed away since our last meeting and good wishes were extended to Lionel Pairpoint who could not be with us due to ill-health. Michael displayed the 2005 Crosby Calendar and this was eagerly snapped up by many present. He expressed his thanks to Ron Bosley for his hard work in again putting the calendar together for us.

Greetings from Australia in the form of a video showing David Currington, Thane Cooper and Rod Poynter singing "It Is Crosby, Who Else Could It Be" got the event off to a rousing start and this was followed by a short video covering the Dublin celebration in May with messages from Jane Fitzgerald, Sue Horn and Mary Quinn. The songs from the 1967 George O'Reilly production *A Little Bit Of Irish* were linked with this Dublin video and this gave us the opportunity to introduce George himself who spoke briefly about the making of the programme and some of his experiences with Bing.

The video presentation continued with an extract from the Hofstra conference showing Gary Giddins introducing a marvellous Bing and Johnny Mercer medley from a *Hollywood Palace* show. Next up was a Rich Little segment from the 2003 Gonzaga celebration with Rich giving his George W. Bush impression and then taking part in a 1976 medley with Bing. Short extracts from *Two Plus Fours*, *Check and Double Check* and *Out Of This World* were a prelude to the Bing and Clay Aiken duet which brought a rather mixed reaction from the audience. The next rarity was the 1976 travelogue *Bing's Britain* which has recently re-surfaced and Bing's fluency in his unscripted remarks was remarkable to see. The final part in the miscellany was the first ten minutes of Bing's 1976 interview with a Scottish schoolgirl which brought us up nicely to meal time.

We had arranged for a carvery in the adjacent Woodlands Restaurant on the basis that this would give members a choice and would hopefully ensure that we could be served quickly and get back to our Crosbyana activities. The former was certainly confirmed whilst the latter was not delivered due to delays in serving soup and later coffee. Two hours from start to finish of the meal was a little too long in the circumstances but at least it did give us the chance to have a nice chat with each other.



Ken Barnes and Helen Rutherford look at the new "Swingin' With Bing" set.

Our star guest was Ken Barnes who has done so much for our cause over the years. Ken outlined some background information about his involvement with Bing for the benefit of the "newer fellas" before giving us a fascinating presentation about his new 3-CD set "Swingin' With Bing". He introduced several of the songs telling amusing stories about the songwriters involved and all present were impressed by the superb quality of the tracks. The final song played was "Memphis Blues" with Bing joined by Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong in a classic rendition.

It was then the turn of Arnold Pope to present his 22nd. annual quiz and several members achieved remarkable scores of 9 out 10 and were duly rewarded with prizes as were the runners-up.

To take us to a close at 10:30 p.m., we showed a DVD comprising songs extracted from Bing's films and we saw great performances by Bing from *Down Memory Lane*, *Pennies From Heaven*, *Paris Honeymoon*, *The Starmaker*, *Dixie* and *Blue Skies*. Seen on the big screen with excellent sound, the quality was most impressive and it made a fitting conclusion to our meeting.

Michael Crampton expressed the wish that we would all return for the 40th. meeting next year and to the strains of Bing singing "A Perfect Day" we melted away into the night.

NEXT YEAR WILL BE THE 40th MEETING AND IT WILL TAKE PLACE ON SUNDAY OCTOBER 2nd. Make a note in your diary now. This will be the time to make the effort to come if you have been thinking about it for some time.

One of those making his debut at the Leeds meeting was John Walton and he expressed his thoughts as follows.

39th Leeds Meeting and Associated Ramblings

Weetwood Hall was further away from Lincoln than I thought. Stuck in nose-to-tail traffic through a road works diversion on the Leeds ring road, I couldn't help wondering whether it was all going to be worth it. Closer to eighty now than fifty, I had earlier in the year allowed my ever encroaching memories of a misspent youth to lead me into joining the ICC, the first time in my life I'd ever joined an 'appreciation society'.

For me, the 'Bing-thing' started in infancy. Ours was a wartime household of much activity and even more verbosity. Everyone spoke most of the time and listened only occasionally. The radio was usually on but mostly unheeded, a sad brown box in the corner of the living room which knew when it was beaten. But just when you felt its valves must surely implode in a final gesture of despair, a Bing Crosby track would float across the airwaves. Everything in the room would stop. My family would become silent and still, and the brown box would seem to swell with pride as everyone gazed appreciatively in its direction.

My parents, grandparents and other family members were all in awe of Bing's talent. When his performance was over and the occasion had been marked with a suitable reverential pause, they'd say to me in hushed tones: "When you grow up, if you want to be a singer, that's what you've got to sound like."

Of course, it was no use reminding them of this mantra, planted deep into the subconscious of a three-year-old, when, ten years later, the thirteen-year-old was 'boo-boo-boo-ing' all around the house. It was Jonathan Miller who once said that in his early teen years he hated himself for any way in which he was not like Danny Kaye. For me, it was the same with Bing. Comments such as "I shouldn't imagine all the boys at your school go around crooning all the time" and "Didn't you say you had some physics homework to do?" invariably fell on deaf ears. I'd had some excellent mentors in the techniques of not listening. The ultimate result was I did for a while work as a professional vocalist who did sound a just a little bit like Bing. But at a time when Denny Dennis and Michael Holliday had come and gone and the record companies wanted rock groups, I was at least a decade too late. So, after a vain attempt to get Bing out of my voice and join the rock revolution, I gave up and decided to take on proper jobs.

But now, in cantankerous old age, I've returned. I'm singing with a jazz band, *Jive At Five*, and, up to now, nobody's thrown ripe fruit. As I said, I'm revisiting my misspent youth, and that's why, remembering my original inspiration, I joined International Club Crosby.

When I announced to my wife that I was going to the Leeds event, she said "Won't you have to dress up?" I told her she was confusing Bing Crosby with Sherlock Holmes. Stuck as I was, though, in the ring road traffic, I couldn't help dwelling on her words and fearing the worst. Would I indeed be met with a galaxy of hats and pipes, and people trying to look ultra-casual and crooning tunelessly? Would they have devices clipped on their heads to make their ears stick out? Would all the women look like Mary Martin, Rhonda Fleming or Grace Kelly? Worse still, would I be pounced upon as soon as I arrived and made to answer a *key induction*

question? You know the kind of thing: "Which of the musicians who played on Bing's sixth record release of 1934 had a sister whose middle name was Thelma?" The penalty for an incorrect answer would be no dinner. Failure to answer a further such question would result in summary expulsion with no return of ticket price.

I need not have worried. As Michael Crampton had assured me in advance, I was among kindred spirits, and felt this as soon as I entered. In fact, there were eleven of us who were new, all made to feel very welcome by those who'd been coming for years. And there seemed to be absolutely nothing different about those present apart from a mild residual bemusement that popular music had taken such a nasty turn; a turn from a world where everyone knew Bing was the best of all time.

I was very impressed by both the choice and quality of the film and television extracts we saw. I particularly enjoyed 'Bing's Britain', the promotional documentary that Bing introduced and voiced-over. It was completely unscripted, encompassing both relaxation and commitment, in a way that many journalistic professionals would have found difficult, even after preparation. Bing's wonderful speaking voice was never used to better effect. Listening to early Bing tracks played with the clarity only modern technology can supply, I was astounded all over again by the various kinds of vocal resonance Bing was able to produce as his voice soared up and down the octaves, never once giving away that there might just be some technique involved in this.

Dinner at Weetwood Hall was excellent; conversation at the table most agreeable. I chatted to Stan Wootton, from Leicester, also new to the ICC, and to Dave Penrose and Ken Shaw, from Hull. The topics were largely but not exclusively to do with Bing, but it was all very amiable and relaxed. After dinner, the day was excellently climaxed by Ken Barnes' insights and recollections as he presented tracks from 'Swingin' With Bing - The Lost Radio Performances', the monumental digital remastering project he's worked on for five years. He was congratulated by all for having done so much in the last few decades to keep Bing's work alive.

Michael Crampton and Malcolm Macfarlane did a fine job at a splendid venue. They sailed calmly and pleasantly through some early glitches when the computerised projection system, evidently programmed by a mole from the Sinatra Music Society, kept switching itself off. Later they were to see their efforts amply rewarded through the appreciative faces of their fellow guests. Everyone I spoke to approved of the venue and of the choice of material. An encouraging sign was that numbers were up on last year, and not all the hair in the presentation room was grey!

The end of the day came all too quickly. I ran to my car in the rain clutching a CD of some Bing tracks from the 1930s, my reward for scoring six out of ten in Arnold's quiz. (No really obscure questions, after all!) At the front of my mind were the thoughts: "Maybe my youth wasn't all that misspent" and "Why did I leave it so late to join?"

Somehow, on the way back to Lincoln, I left the Leeds ring road without having noticed it.

John Walton

(Editor: What a great article from John. His feelings were almost identical to mine when I attended my first Leeds meeting in 1979.)

Rosemary Clooney Music Festival

The sixth annual *Rosemary Clooney Music Festival* took place on September 25 in Maysville, Kentucky and included a program called "The Clooney-Crosby Connection II." Kathryn Crosby, Nick Clooney and Rosemary's little sister, Gail, shared memories of the Clooney-Crosby connection in between the showing of video clips.

The video presentation was prepared by Bob DeFlores and was divided into several segments. After viewing Rosemary and Bing in their respective Coronet and Minute Maid commercials, the audience was treated to some early clips of Bing [singing 'Blue of The Night' (1932), 'June in January' (1934) and 'Pennies from Heaven' (1936)], plus his singing 'It Had to Be You' with Buddy Cole, and 'Ol' Man River' from his last series of concerts.

Between the showing of the clips, Mrs. Crosby sang two special numbers, "Second Time Around" and then "Moonlight Becomes You" which was dedicated to her daughter Mary Frances. The next video segment featured just Rosemary. From a 1953 special with Bob Hope, she performed 'Honey' to the delight of the troops of the S.S. Los Angeles and from a tribute to Manny Sachs she performed 'You Started Something'. Finally there was an excerpt from a *4 Girls 4* special when she performed 'I'm Singing This Song for You'. This segment concluded with her performing 'Tenderly' at a Royal Variety Performance and being greeted by the Queen after the performance.

The next two video presentations featured Bing and Rosemary with some of their duet partners over the years, plus two clips of them together. Bing was shown singing with Frank Sinatra, Patti Page, Kathryn Crosby and Bette Midler, while Rosemary was shown performing with her little sister Gail, Dean Martin, Bob Hope and on two BBC shows with Bob Monkhouse and Val Doonican.

After the clips ran, Gail joined her brother Nick on stage to tell a sweet story about Bing. When Gail was a teenager, her mother and Rosemary purchased a 57 Thunderbird for her. Gail enjoyed driving very fast in those California Valleys. One day, trying to drive as fast as she could, she came upon a car, driven by an older man, who was going way too slow for Gail's taste. She, of course, passed the gentleman on a double yellow line, and while doing so glared at him for slowing her down. It was none other than Bing - the very good friend of her sister Rosemary! She knew she was in trouble and waited every day for weeks to be called on the carpet, knowing for sure he was going to call Rosemary and tell her what she'd done. He never did.....the anxiety of waiting and wondering was punishment enough.

The show concluded with a 50th Anniversary tribute to the film *White Christmas*. Rosemary had said about the movie, "My fondest memory is just being able to further my friendship, deepen the friendship that I had with Bing. That's the thing that came out of the picture

that I was left with for the rest of Bing's life and that was very important to me."

After the *Clooney-Crosby Connection II* program concluded, Mrs. Crosby signed copies of her book "My Last Years With Bing," as well as the audio versions of it and her previous release "My Life With Bing."

Members with access to the Internet can go to http://www.rosemaryclooney.com/ to see photographs and also video of Kathryn singing her songs at the event.

The Crosby Years

Gord Atkinson recalls the early days of Club Crosby in Canada.

As a fallow young fellow, an impressionable teenager, I was captivated by the manner and style of the incomparable Bing. That was over sixty years ago when I became a collector of Crosbyana and a lifelong fan. Since then, there has not been a time when I have not been aware of his influence on my life and career.

My musical education, from jazz to light classics, developed by listening to his superb recordings. His sense of humour and engaging personality on radio and on the screen had a profound effect on my own disposition and identity.

Like many others who were attracted to show-business, he was my mentor. As our friendship developed, our association encouraged me to pursue a career in broadcasting. My first position in the entertainment world was in my home town, Toronto, as a writer-publicist with the Compo Company. At the time that I joined their staff in 1947 they were the Canadian distributors of Decca Records.

During that same period I had taken on the position of president of the Canadian branch of Club Crosby. In this role I found myself at odds with a policy of my new employer. It was a ruling that by today's business methods and radio programming seems ludicrous. Compo officials felt justified in preventing radio stations from playing Decca records. They were convinced that if people could hear their recordings on the radio, they would not go out and buy them. It was apparent to everyone else in the industry that air play would stimulate sales.

Frustrated at not being able to hear Bing's Decca discs on local radio, I wrote to him and his brother-manager, Everett, explaining the broadcast ban. They were in agreement that it should be lifted and assured me that they would have no objections to Crosby records being broadcast.

With their encouragement I contacted the Compo policy makers and requested permission to begin a 30-minute program of selections from Bing's vast Decca library. To my surprise and delight they agreed, but only for a once-a-week show, reserving the right (for the time being) not to lift the ban for general air play. Encouraged by my fellow Crosby fans I approached the most listened-to radio station in Canada, CFRB, Toronto. Despite my obvious broadcast deficiencies they accepted my proposed program and services.

Bing was very supportive and sent me recorded greetings and all his latest releases. We would on occasion do telephone interviews. Before long it was decided that the ratings were so good that once a month we would expand our format and invite listeners to attend these special broadcasts. The audiences included listeners of all ages and all backgrounds. Never before, or since that time, has any entertainer had such broad and universal appeal. A limited number of tickets were issued and everyone in attendance was given a fan club pin and a membership card. We also went on location to cinemas where new Crosby movies were having their Canadian premieres.

Gord presenting a Club Crosby broadcast in September 1950.

The show remained on the air for seven years, from 1948-1955, broadcast from both Toronto and Ottawa. It was during that period that our friend, Priscilla Koernig of California, was the President of the world-wide Club Crosby.

At the time that we began broadcasting, magnetic tape was not in general use and the only means of recording was on expensive cylindrical discs. While the radio station did record one of the shows to send to Bing, the cost of recording was well beyond my meagre budget. For years thereafter I thought all my old programs were lost in time and space. However, for whatever reason (and without my knowledge), someone had recorded one of the shows. To my amazement I was informed a few years ago that it had miraculously crossed the Atlantic and ended up in an old radio collection in Dublin, Ireland. My friend, and Crosby sleuth "par excellence", Malcolm Macfarlane, purchased a copy and kindly sent it to me as one of the most surprising gifts of my life.

It was with trepidation that I listened to the program and heard a youthful broadcaster whose voice sounded like it was running at high speed. I felt like I was in the

"twilight zone". One of my earliest performances from 1949 had come back to haunt me. However, despite my inadequacy as an apprentice broadcaster, that vintage program brought back a wave of nostalgia with memories of old friends and happy times.

Gord Atkinson

(Editor: How amazing that there was a ban on playing Bing's records on the radio. I sometimes wonder if some modern-day radio stations think the ban is still in place!

Incidentally, Gord's wonderful radio series 'The Crosby Years' remains available and see Trading Post for details).

Keeping Track

Christmas Is A-Coming! Just What I Wanted For Christmas! The Most Wonderful Time Of The Year! .... And if you are looking for that little extra something to ask from Poppa Santa Claus, you've come to the right place! Read on ...

COMPACT DISCS

"Just a postscript now, and I'll be through" sang Bing as he entered the final chorus of "I'm Gonna Sit Right Down And Write Myself A Letter", and with your indulgence, I'll do the same. The reissue of "Bing With A Beat" was trumpeted in ***BING 137***, but what I didn't realise was that there was another hidden bonus in the Bluebird RCA release. It's stereo! Not re-channeled, not binaural, but full, honest to goodness stereo! So, even if you have the album in one of its predecessor forms, you really cannot afford not to have the new one. It's a must. Metro Times, not the most friendly reviewer of Bing, said that "it sounds like it was recorded yesterday" and is "universally acknowledged as his finest long-player". 'Nuff said.

And whilst we are still in sweep-up mode, the next two volumes of **The Chronological Bing Crosby Volumes 36 & 37** are, alas, still at work-in-progress stage. John McNicholas tells that they will be out "soon after Christmas" but no further details are available at the time of writing.

So, with that out of the way, what's new? In all honesty, although there are plenty of "new" things, it's all rather run-of-the-mill stuff - cheap, convenience re-packaging of material we have many times over, rather than anything that is likely to fill that gap in the collection. But, 27 years after his death, it's testament to Bing's enduring legacy that so much "new" is still appearing.

Feels Good, Feels Right **Vocalion Decca Archives CDLF 8107** **UK** **£4.99**

1. Feels Good, Feels Right, 2. Once In a While 3. As Time Goes By 4. An Old Fashioned Love 5. Time On My Hands 6. The Way We Were 7. There's nothing That I Haven't Sung About 8. The Night Is Young And You're So Beautiful 9. Nevertheless 10. The Rose In Her Hair 11. What's New 12. When I Leave The World Behind

Bing recorded this album in London in 1976 (the picture on the right shows him rehearsing with session man, Keith Nichols) and despite the extensive catalogue that he produced with Ken Barnes, this, I know, is many people's favourite album from Bing's 1970s sessions. And it's not hard to see why - good songs, simple arrangements and Bing singing with relaxed ease. It has been on CD before, (and indeed had three "extra" tracks included, even though they didn't make it onto the original LP), but even though it's not "new", it's nevertheless, very welcome.

Going My Way **Prism PLATCD988** **UK** **£3.99**

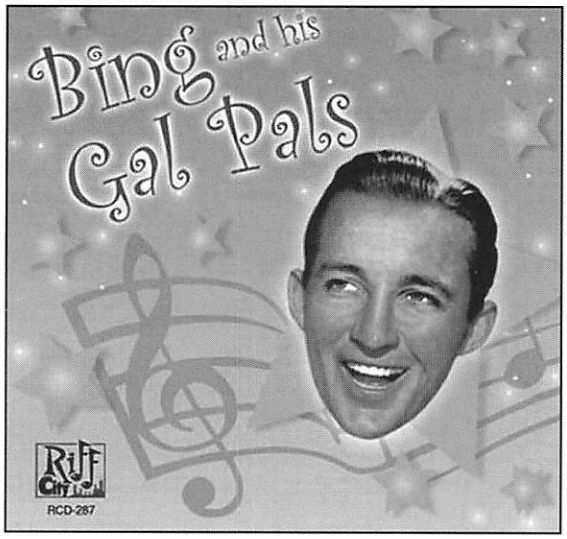
1. Dear Hearts And Gentle People 2. Play A Simple Melody (with Gary Crosby) 3. Gone Fishin' (with Louis Armstrong) 4. Far Away Places 5. I Can't Begin To Tell You 6. Sam's Song (with Gary Crosby) 7. Have I Told You Lately (with the Andrews Sisters) 8. In The Cool, Cool, Cool Of The Evening (with Jane Wyman) 9. Mule Train 10. Sioux City Sue 11. Ghost Riders In The Sky 12. If I Loved You 13. Night And Day 14. A Fella With An Umbrella 15. Day By Day 16. Yah-Ta-Ta, Yah-Ta-Ta (Talk, Talk, Talk) (with Judy Garland) 17. Sparrow In The Tree Top (with the Andrews Sisters) 18. The Day After Forever 19. The Bells Of St. Mary's 20. Put It There Pal (with Bob Hope) 21. Evelina 22. Going My Way 23. You Belong To My Heart 24. Galway Bay 25. Now Is The Hour

Decca tracks of course from Bing's heartland years, and nice to see one or two less familiar titles, especially "A Fella With An Umbrella". Nicely packaged, bright cover and cheap! Available from www.prismdirect.co.uk

Only The Number 1's **K-Tel ECD3877** **UK** **£3.99**

1. Swinging On A Star 2. Moonlight Becomes You 3. Don't Fence Me In (with the Andrews Sisters) 4. Pennies From Heaven 5. I Can't Begin To Tell You 6. Alexander's Ragtime Band (with Al Jolson) 7. Brother Can You Spare A Dime? 8. Only Forever 9. I Love You (Porter) 10. Sweet Leilani 11. The Moon Got In My Eyes 12. Please 13. Love In Bloom 14. Sunday Monday Or Always 15. Bob White (with Connie Boswell) 16. You Must Have Been A Beautiful Baby 17. Play A Simple Melody (with Gary Crosby) 18. Now Is The Hour

I must confess to being a little sceptical when I saw the track listing for this budget release from the UK, but hats off to K-Tel. They have done their homework, and sure enough, each of these titles did indeed hit No 1 in the USA, as evidenced by Joel Whitburn's mighty tome "Pop Memories 1890-1954".



Bing And His Gal Pals **Riff** **Entertainment**
CDPRGA 50290 **USA** **$10.99**
1. When You Wore A Tulip (with Judy Garland) 2. On A Slow Boat To China (with Peggy Lee) 3. The Surrey With The Fringe On Top (with Helen O'Connell) 4. Ole Buttermilk Sky (Bing) 5. That's A Plenty (with Connee Boswell) 6. It Takes Two To Tango (with Rosemary Clooney) 7. Cuanto Le Gusta (with Peggy Lee) 8. I Don't Know Why (with Lauren Bacall) 9. Young At Heart (Bing) 10. Silver Coated Moon (with Ethel Merman) 11. For Me And My Gal (with Judy Garland) 12. You Came A Long Way From St. Louis (with Peggy Lee) 13. I Can Dream Can't I (with the Andrews Sisters) 14. Till We Meet Again (with Patti Page)
This compilation is familiar radio material, albeit with a different twist, and a nice bright cover. How nice to see the picture of Bing that adorned so many 10" LPs back in the Fifties, making an appearance in the digital age. Highlight tracks for me are "Surrey With The Fringe On Top" and the spoof duet with Merman, "Silver Coated Moon".

Bing Crosby - American Music Legends **Cracker Barrel 210587** **USA** **$11.99**
1. Swinging On a Star 2. San Fernando Valley 3. Pennies From Heaven 4. Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Positive (with the Andrews Sisters) 5. Personality 6. I'll Be Seeing You 7. Get Your Kicks On) Route 66 (with the Andrews Sisters) 8. Some Enchanted Evening 9. You Are My Sunshine 10. Oh! What a Beautiful Morning (with Trudy Erwin)
Wig has already given details of this new issue which is available from Cracker Barrel stores in the USA or via the web on http://shop.crackerbarrel.com/online/shopping/default.asp/. Other artists in their American Music Legends collection are Rosemary Clooney, Tommy Dorsey, Roy Acuff, Ella Fitzgerald, Hank Williams and Johnny Cash.

On the Road Again **Radiospirits 40062** **USA** **$34.99 (CD)**
$24.99 (Tape)

This 6-CD set is all drawn from radio material. Here's how Radiospirits describe it:
From "Road to Singapore" in 1940 to "Road to Hong Kong" in 1962, Hope and Crosby were one of comedy's greatest teams. Their humorous on-stage bickering and real-life affection for each other was apparent whenever they joined together - and their craft was so fine-tuned that other actors they worked with had trouble containing their laughter after one of Bob or Bing's quick ad-libs. Whether it was Bob on Bing's Show, or Bing on Bob's, these stars were ahead of their time, often stopping their performance to directly address the audience, thus sweeping them into the performance. So pull up your chair to the Philco, tune in and be transported on the road with Bob Hope and Bing Crosby. Featured are 10 Episodes: THE LUX RADIO THEATRE, The Road to Morocco 04-05/43 * THE SCREEN GUILD THEATRE, Altar Bound 02-23-41 * THE SCREEN GUILD PLAYERS, Holiday Inn 01-11-43 * THE BOB HOPE SHOW, Guest: Bing Crosby 09-21-43 * COMMAND PERFORMANCE, The Audition 09-06-45 * COMMAND PERFORMANCE, Dick Tracy in B-Flat 02-15-45 * PHILCO RADIO TIME, First Show of the Series 10-16- 46 * THE BOB HOPE SHOW, First Chesterfield Show 10-10-50 * THE BING CROSBY SHOW, The Road to Las Vegas 12-26-51 * THE JACK BENNY PROGRAM, The Road to Bali 01-11-53

A couple of other items to note before we get the tree out. Naxos in the UK have produced four high quality CDs of early Bing material which we have reviewed in earlier issues and three of them have now been packaged into a boxed set with the title 'Introducing Bing Crosby' (8.103005). And just picking one of the many 'various artists' sets that feature Bing, look out for 'Crooners' on the Soho label (SOHO CD033). It's a UK release, three discs for a tenner, and a good selection from Bing and his peers. Track #1 is actually Dean Martin's "If I Could Sing Like Bing" and "singing like Bing" is the theme of a very interesting sleeve, which is worth a read. If you don't want to buy the disc, you can find the sleeve notes on www.unionsquaremusic.co.uk/title.php?ALBUM_ID=524&LABEL_ID=5

All of which takes us to Christmas ...

Bing Crosby Christmas **Lifestyles 160055** **USA** **$3.99**
1. Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer 2. White Christmas 3. The First Noel 4. Let's Start The New Year Right 5. Faith Of Our Fathers 6. God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen 7. O Come All Ye Faithful 8. Jingle Bells (with the Andrews Sisters) 9. You're All I Want For Christmas 10. Silent Night

Tuneful tinsel, but nothing new, and not to be confused with ...

Bing Crosby Christmas **North Quest 216003** **USA** **$6.65**
Disc 1 1. White Christmas 2. Silver Bells (with Carol Richards) 3. Twelve Days of Christmas (with the Andrews Sisters) 4. Let

It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow! 5. Faith of Our Fathers 6. You're All I Want for Christmas 7. Adeste Fideles 8. Here Comes Santa Claus (with the Andrews Sisters) 9. O Come All Ye Faithful 10. Silent Night
Disc: 2 1. Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer 2. The First Noel 3. Santa Claus Is Coming to Town (with the Andrews Sisters) 4. Jingle Bells (with the Andrews Sisters) 5. God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen 6. Little Jack Frost Get Lost 7. Sleigh Ride in July 8. Happy Holiday 9. Let's Start the New Year Right 10. I'll Be Home for Christmas

Most internet shops list this as "Various Artists" but as far as I can see, these all look like Crosby titles to me. Similar vein to the one with the same name, but more of it!

From Japan, there are also three new releases, if you have the yen. Two are Christmas focussed - 'Winter Wonderland' (TOCO 53390) and 'Merry Christmas' (UCCC 9082), together with 'Home On The Range' (UCCC 9108). No track details to hand, but all three are digipack releases (i.e. cardboard sleeves rather than plastic cases). Familiar material I would expect, but if you must have everything, head for the land of the rising sun. Meanwhile, back in the USA, Blue Mountain have come up with 'Bing Crosby & Friends Christmas Special' (#907302) but no amount of web-searching has come up with any more detail than that although I suspect that it contains the familiar Bing and Frank Sinatra tracks from their 1957 Christmas special.

Last and by no means least in our Christmas section is this.

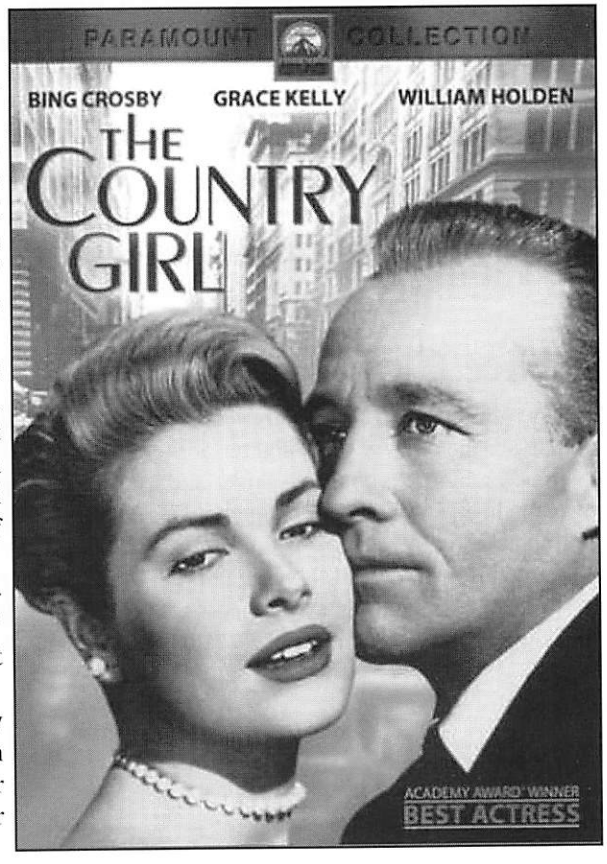
The Frank Sinatra Christmas Collection **Reprise 76542** **USA** **$14.99**
This is a Sinatra release, much heralded in the press as it apparently includes Ol' Blue Eyes' last ever solo recording. That track, "Silent Night" was recorded in 1991 for charitable purposes, presumably with minimalist accompaniment, since much is also made of the orchestral arrangement that has now been added to the vocal track that has lain dormant for 13 years. Perhaps of greater interest to Crosby fans are the four duets with Bing, two from the Reprise album "The Twelve Songs Of Christmas" and two that are culled from the 1957 TV special that starred Bing and Frank and which turned up on DVD last year. The Crosby duets included are "We Wish You The Merriest", "Go Tell It On The Mountain", "The Christmas Song" and "White Christmas" (the latter two being from TV).

And before we reach for the DVD remote, Gary Giddins' book 'Bing Crosby: The Early Years' is now available on disc and tape, from Blackstone Audio Books. Read by Edward Lewis, it's either 16 tapes ($69.94) or two CDs ($39.95), but only in mp3 format (which means that they are only playable on computers or extremely clever DVD players). What a project! My guess is that it must run for around 20 hours. The tapes can also be rented for $14.94.

DVD

As with the CDs, there's not too much to get excited about on the DVD front, although having had my favourite Bing album, "Bing With A Beat" make a welcome re-appearance this year, it's nice now to find my favourite film doing the same thing.

The Country Girl **Paramount**
Home Video **(Region 1)** **USA** **$14.99**



This of course is the film where Bing most obviously moved away from the "Bing Crosby" character that underpinned everything that he did. Bing plays Frank Elgin, a washed-up actor who has bottomed out as a severe alcoholic, is highly dependent on his country girl wife (Grace Kelly) but who somehow still manages to keep up a breezy, public front (some parallels with the real Bing perhaps, in that regard). One reviewer on Amazon said he was "shocked by Bing Crosby's acting" which I think is intended as a compliment. Picture quality transfer is good, I'm told, although as I write, my copy is still flying the ocean.

Beyond that, we note that "That's Entertainment" is now available as a "Trilogy" (sounds like "Star Wars"!) at $34.98 in Region 1 format, whilst Bing's "Road To Hollywood" compilation of Mack Sennett material is part of "Funny Guys", a UK Region 2 release from Brentwood Home Video (45480-9). The same compilation, plus "Road To Bali" is also part of a 2-DVD set from the States called "Kings Of Comedy".

In November, Warner Home Video released 'Looney Tunes - Golden Collection, Vol. 2' which includes the 'Hollywood Steps Out' cartoon featuring Bing as an M.C. Expensive at $45 from Amazon but you get 4 discs of top quality material for your money.

A couple of other DVDs are worth a moment's pause. "Rosemary Clooney: Girl Singer" from Concord Jazz is a Michael Feinstein initiated compilation of songs from Rosie's 1956 TV series, unseen for almost 50 years. Rosie singing standards at a time when most of her

output was chart-focused is reason enough for buying the set, but there are also some great extra features that cover many facets of Rosie's career. One such is simply called "Rosemary & Bing" and features Feinstein, Rosie's brother Nick, and several of her children talking about the relationship being the two of them. It's a nice, simple tribute to a couple who were simply "good buddies".

Lastly, several readers will be aware of the "Best Of The Dean Martin Variety Show" series. These are one hour DVDs that compile bits of Dean Martin's TV shows from 1965-1974. Produced on a subscription basis by the show's producer, Greg Garrison, they feature Dean with just about every big star in the business. And since Bing was a regular visitor, he pops up in several of them (the series is already at #20). Subscriptions are only available to US and Canadian residents, but UK readers can do as I have and pick them up quite easily from eBay. They're good!

WHAT'S ON THE WEB?

And speaking of eBay, there has been the usual high volume of Bing related stuff for sale over the past few months. CDs, DVDs, sheet music in abundance of course, but also some more unusual things.

The highest value item that I recall seeing was one of Bing's money clips. This was described as "given to Bing by his wife, Dixie", and featured pictures of their sons. I didn't see what it went for, but the Buy-It-Now price was a cool $15,000! Other items that caught my eye were a 1967 radio script for the 25th anniversary of "The Voice Of America", for which Bing was the original host, together with an award certificate to Bing, commemorating the anniversary.

I was also struck by a link between Bing and Edsel Ford that pre-dates the well-known "Edsel Show" of 1957. Edsel Ford was the son of Henry Ford, and in the '50s, gave his name to the only white elephant ever produced by the Ford Motor Company. Long before the days of the finned cars though, Decca Records presented a disc to Edsel, featuring the "Decca All Stars" singing "Way Back Home", with Bing the most prominent. Recording date was given as 20 May 1935, and the matrix number A/39530. Does anyone know any more about this unusual disc and indeed, did any of us buy it? The starting price was $199.

And finally a query about what could be an unknown Bing record. On eBay in October, a 7" single by Lindsay Crosby was offered for $5. It was on the Ariola label and was numbered 7682. The tracks were "Christmas Won't Be The Same" and "Old Friends of Mine". The latter track was apparently a version of "Auld Lang Syne" and it was suggested that Bing had some involvement in the track, perhaps throwing in asides as he did with Phil Crosby on his recording of "Thanks". Does anyone know anything about this recording by Lindsay and can they shed any light on it? Does Bing take part?

****

Do you remember the "tours of the stars homes" that used to be part of the Hollywood tourist trail back in the 40s and 50s? Well, in a way, they are still going strong on the Internet, but with a macabre touch. www.findagrave.com will take you on a tour of the graveyards that are now home to just about every famous celebrity you care to mention! Not the happiest site in the world but one nice touch is the facility to leave electronic cards and flowers. Here's one inscription from a card for Bing from earlier this year - *"I think I always got you wrong I read too many negative books and listened to too many people. I see now that your spirit is good, and at the end of the day that's all that matters. I always liked your music and films but could never watch or listen without feeling you were somehow a bad person. I now believe I was wrong. God bless you Bing. May you rest in peace."*

A nice sentiment - but boy, that eldest son of Bing's sure has something to answer for!

Ken Crossland

A Nice Christmas Present?

Barry Whittingham has kindly had some Bing lapel badges prepared for members and their friends. Modelled on a badge donated to the club by the daughter of the late Percy Keepin, the badge has the traditional Bing image with a pipe (as used with the ICC emblem on our front cover and at the foot of page 49) and is about 1 1/4 inches (26 mm) tall by 7/8" (22 mm) wide. It's a green enamelled alloy badge with a gold border. The cost, including postage and packing, is £5 in the UK, £5.50 in Europe & Ireland and £6 for the rest of the world. If you wish to obtain a badge, contact Barry Whittingham at El Rancho Grande, 25c Garton Close, Cinderhill, Nottingham NG8 8RZ, UK (phone: 0115 913 4240, e-mail: barry.whittingham@ntlworld.com)
Also, Barry is planning a Bing get-together in his locality (2 miles from junction 26 of the M1) for Sunday February 13. Will those interested in attending, please contact Barry by mid-January.

BING CROSBY

SHEPPERTON STUDIOS,
SHEPPERTON, MIDDX.

CHERTSEY 2611

September 20, 1961

Dear George:

I am enclosing herewith my check for $200.00 -- a sum which seems sufficient to cover the price of the gift to the Stockdales, my obligation to Mr. Fogerty, and if there is anything left over, you can apply it against what I am sure must be a substantial sum you have incurred in my behalf for stamps, telephone calls, and so forth.

As I told you on the phone, Cy Rady had queried me about whether or not you and the Irish Record Factors Incorporated were connected. Based on your affirmative response, I am going to tell Cy to go ahead and allow the release of the eight singles under this label. I hope that it will be profitable for the factors and for your interests.

With regard to the staff for California, we are looking here and I think it would be a good idea for you to put out some queries there also. Maybe Kitty would have a little available time to interview some people. To clarify our requirements, we want an upstairs maid, a butler who can drive and a cook. These could be single people -- we have found in the past that the butler married to the cook sometimes causes difficulties, but it's not an obstacle which couldn't be overcome. I will call you in a week or ten days and see if there is anything you've been able to develop.

Again, I must thank you and Kitty for one of the most wonderful experiences in my career. I'm sure you are glad that my visit wasn't of any longer duration or your ulcers may have multiplied and re-multiplied.

With love to all,

Bing

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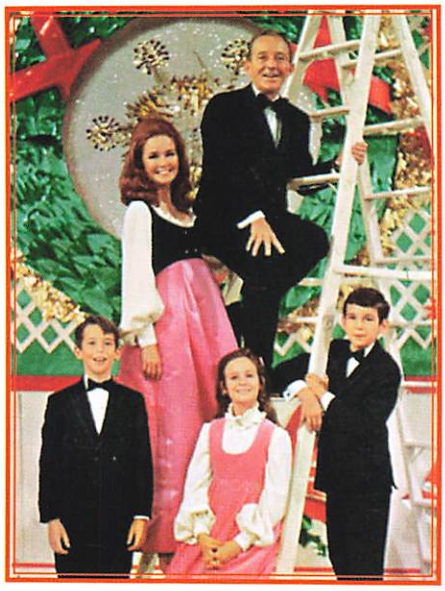

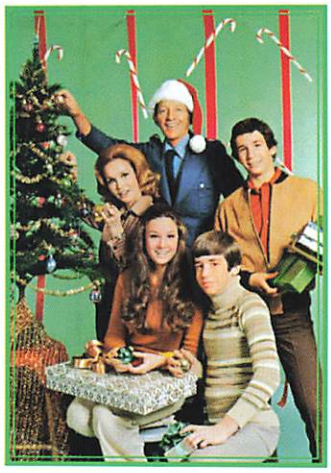

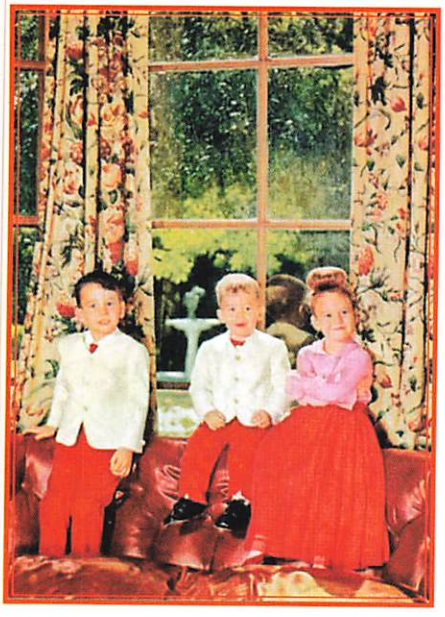

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Happy and Holy

Christmas

The Crosbys

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